

# NEVADA BILL WOULD BREAK CONFESSIONAL SEAL

On Monday, Nevada State Minority Leader Dina Titus introduced a bill that would end the exemption currently afforded in Nevada law shielding priests from reporting crimes of child sexual abuse heard in the confessional. Titus is responding to a plea by the Nevada Coalition Against Sexual Violence that says its goal is “keeping our kids safe.”

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league’s reaction today:

“Nevada lawmakers would be wise not to waste the taxpayers’ money discussing a bill that is patently unconstitutional. It is not likely the courts would permit such an extravagant abuse of power by the state, no matter how noble the cause. Separation of church and state has no meaning if the state is allowed to trump the doctrinal prerogatives of a religion, and this is especially true *when there is no evidence to suggest that the only way an important state objective can be realized is by allowing the state to encroach on religion.*

“A similar bill died a quick death in Maryland last week and the one introduced in Kentucky is dead for this session. A wiser course of action was chosen by Arizona legislators when they explicitly chose not to tamper with the confessional seal.

“If the goal is really to protect children, then this can certainly be accomplished without fiddling with the priest-penitent privilege. And if this is the goal, why do lawmakers like Titus not demand that all professionals who learn of cases of child sexual abuse report them to the authorities? Why, for example, is there no talk of making teachers and abortion providers report such cases?

“Following precedent established in like cases, I will now write to every member of the Nevada legislature requesting that this bill be shelved immediately.”