

NEW YORK SEX ABUSE BILL STALLS

After months of controversy, New York Assemblywoman Margaret Markey's sex abuse bill that would suspend the statute of limitations was stifled and will not pass unless a special session is called and the bill is put to a vote.

It was no surprise that Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio—whose diocese covers Markey's district—vigorously opposed the legislation because it would open a door to endless claims against the Church and leave public institutions untouched. The legislation that DiMarzio favored was that of Assemblyman Vito Lopez which treated public and private institutions the same. What was surprising was Markey's language used in retaliation.

Markey accused Bishop DiMarzio of being “on the borderline of jeopardizing his not-for-profit status.” She also warned, “If I were the bishop, I would walk very cautiously.”

Not only did Markey show no respect for the First Amendment provisions guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of religion, her attempt to silence the bishop showed her contempt for the standards of decency.

After we hit Markey for her statements about DiMarzio, a story ran in the *New York Times* reporting that Markey had decided to amend her bill allowing public schools to be sued as well.

We pointed out that Markey was nothing, if not dishonest. All along she insisted that her bill applied equally to both private and public institutions. But if that were the case, why amend it?

This bill was still problematic. While it treated both public and private institutions equally, it still suspended the

statute of limitations for one year, thus permitting anyone to file a claim regardless of when the alleged abuse occurred.

We announced that if Markey's bill prevailed, we would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in a massive public relations campaign to alert those who had been sexually abused by a public school employee that they had a year to sue the schools, provided they met the provisions in the bill.

Our reason for reaching out only to those victimized in a public school was because up until now lawyers and professional victims' abuse advocates have waged a relentless campaign to exclusively stick it to Catholic institutions, while nothing was done to help those victimized by an employee of a public school.

A few days after she amended the bill, Markey chopped it up again, stating that anyone who wished to file a suit during the suspension of the statute of limitations could do so providing that he is not over the age of 53.

Finally on June 23 it appeared that this bill was dead in the water.

On that same day, the AP reported that 700 public school teachers in New York City were being paid full salaries to sit around and do nothing while cases against them were being investigated. The accusations included sex abuse. Also, in that morning's New York *Daily News*, a story ran about a teacher's aide who was reassigned to a desk job after being busted for molesting a first grader; she was thought to be his third victim.

Although the bill has stalled, we will never yield on our pledge. If Markey's bill ever passes, we will do whatever it takes to alert those victimized by public school employees of their right to sue.