NEW YORK STATE BILL ON SEX ABUSE: BASED ON ERRORS OR LIES?

Two days ago, *The National Catholic Register* ran a story on its blog about a bill before the New York State legislature on child sexual abuse that harshly treats private institutions while going easy on public ones. "In a detailed statement responding to criticisms of the bill," the story says, "[Assemblywoman Margaret] Markey said that public schools have handled abuse cases well in recent years, whereas the Catholic hierarchy 'has relied on secrecy, quiet transfers and threats to hide abusers when the threat of public disclosure emerges."' When the Catholic League asked Markey's office for a copy of her statement, we were told by Rosemary Lategano that the story was wrong—there was no such statement. We then called the newspaper and obtained a copy of it.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commuted on this today:

"Was Markey's office in error? Or were we lied to? One thing is for sure: Markey is wrong about the facts. She says the public schools have shown 'increasing sensitivity' to cases of child sexual abuse, and that they 'routinely move swiftly to respond to allegations against employees.'

"In 2007, the AP did a major report on this subject. It concluded that child sexual abuse in the public schools was 'a widespread problem,' saying there was 'a deeply entrenched resistance toward recognizing and fighting abuse.' Moreover, offending teachers are moved from one school district to another, so often that they are called 'mobile molesters.'

"Two years earlier, author and education John Seryak concluded that 'The problem in education dwarfs the Catholic Church problem.' And a year earlier, Dr. Carol Shakeshaft, the

nation’s leading authority on the issue, estimated that ‘the physical abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse of priests.’ So common is the transfer of offending teachers that it is called ‘passing the trash.’

“Markey’s bill is based on faulty assumptions and erroneous data. It also unfairly discriminates between Catholic schools and public schools. And her office is either incompetent or devious.”

Contact Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver: Speaker@assembly.state.ny.us.