NORTH DAKOTA WEIGHS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

 Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the state constitutional amendment being weighed in North Dakota that would ensure religious liberty protections:

On June 12, voters in North Dakota will decide whether to pad their religious liberty protections, or essentially ratify the status quo. Working to deny enhanced religious freedom are radical secular forces that have tirelessly fought these First Amendment rights: Planned Parenthood, NARAL, the Feminist Majority, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the ACLU.

The latter two legal organizations have long resisted the call for new religious liberty protections, so it is hardly surprising to see them fighting this proposed state constitutional amendment. But what about the others? Why are they so exercised about religious liberty? Because much of their agenda, which includes the right to abortion through term, as well as gay marriage, often collides with the conscience rights of practicing Catholics, Evangelicals, Orthodox Jews, Mormons, Muslims, and others. This explains why Planned Parenthood has laid out hundreds of thousands of dollars to stop this initiative.

North Dakotans are entitled to an honest debate on this issue, but unfortunately some of what they are being treated to is pure demagoguery. For instance, the Feminist Majority is floating the idea that "this measure will open doors for violence and discrimination against all women." Really? If that were true, then this should have already happened in the 31 states that have similar protections in place. Of course, this is nonsense.

What this state constitutional amendment does is to lock in the religious rights of North Dakotans; those rights would be protected from tampering unless there is a very good reason for doing so. Like all rights, religious rights are not absolute, and this amendment would not make them so. But it would bring the state into line with the majority of other states by strengthening their religious liberties.