

NPR FEARS ALITO'S CATHOLICISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on what National Public Radio (NPR) is saying about Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito:

"Yesterday, NPR reporter Dahlia Lithwick exclaimed, 'People are very, very much talking about the fact that Alito would be the fifth Catholic on the Supreme Court if confirmed.'

"Catholics do make her nervous. On August 2, she said it was the 'very, very strong religious views' of Catholic Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas that accounted for their conservative positions, something she feared might happen if John Roberts were to get on the bench.

"Lithwick is bothered by 'a 2004 case in which he [Alito] allowed a New Jersey Christian children's group to proselytize on public school grounds,' and a 'Christmas display case that he felt was constitutionally permissible even though there were overt religious symbols.' In her mind, this 'clearly' makes him 'a fan of allowing greater entanglement between church and state in public plans.'

"What she doesn't say is that in the former case, Alito said that the school district could not engage in 'viewpoint discrimination' by treating the free speech rights of Christian students differently from the rights of other students. In the latter case, the 'overt religious symbols' were deemed acceptable because they were surrounded by secular holiday symbols; in doing so, Alito followed the exact standard that Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor developed in 1984.

"We at the Catholic League are very, very disappointed that Lithwick doesn't come right out and demand a moratorium on Catholic nominees for the high court. It would be so much more honest of her to do so."