

NY STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL KOPPELL MISUSES OFFICE

The Catholic League condemns the suspension of Thomas Neidl, head of the criminal investigations unit in the Attorney General's office, for simply registering his moral convictions in a private conversation. New York State Attorney General Oliver Koppell suspended Neidl, who is a Roman Catholic, for conveying in a private phone call his reservations about a new state policy that gives health benefits to gay couples; Neidl also registered his misgivings about the propriety of homosexuals rearing children.

In a statement released today, Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, had this to say about the incident:

"It is an outrage that Catholic employees, working for the state of New York, cannot express their moral convictions—even when done so privately—without triggering legal reprisal. The idea of reinterpreting marriage and the family to accommodate radical gay interests is one that many people, not just Catholics, see as both immoral and ill-advised. But even those who disagree should be expected to practice tolerance and respect the free speech rights and freedom of religion rights that are embedded in issues of conscience.

"It is no surprise that Attorney General Oliver Koppell has misused his office to impose a politically correct agenda. This is the same man whom I personally filmed standing on the steps of the New York Public Library last March 17th showing his support for the radical gay contingent that sought to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Koppell stood with this group as they made a stream of anti-Catholic statements and were then arrested for attempting to march without a permit.

“What makes this matter so disturbing is that Koppell’s office has a track record of showing blatant partisanship on behalf of the radical gay agenda. In March, the Catholic League pressed ethics charges against one of Koppel’s employees, Assistant Attorney General Jim Williams, for orchestrating, during working hours, a conference on how to change the laws affecting gays and lesbians. The Catholic League’s objection stems from its conviction that those who work for the Attorney General ought to be scrupulously non-partisan and should never partake of efforts designed to change laws that they are sworn to enforce; the New York State Ethics Commission has accepted the case and is presently conducting an investigation into the matter.

“Justice demands that Thomas Neidl be reinstated. It would also be appropriate for Attorney General Koppell to attend sensitivity training workshops on the rights of religiously-informed conscientious objectors. The Catholic League would be happy to conduct a workshop for Mr. Koppell and his staff.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American society without defamation or discrimination.