

NYS WEIGHING EXTENSION OF VICTIMS' BILL

[Bill Donohue](#)

In 2022, New York State passed the Adult Survivors Act, allowing victims of sexual abuse who were 18 or older at the time of the alleged abuse a one-time opportunity to file a civil lawsuit against persons or institutions, even if the statute of limitations had expired. It was to last from Thanksgiving of last year to Thanksgiving of this year. Now there is talk among Albany lawmakers to extend the Act for one more year.

On principle, the Catholic League opposes exemptions from the statute of limitations. They are an important due process provision: witnesses may be deceased and memories are not likely to be as acute as they once were. But because of the way unprincipled New York State officials treated the Catholic Church with the earlier Child Victims Act, we enthusiastically support extending the statute of limitations for the Adult Survivors Act. The reasons why will be made plain.

The Adult Survivors Act has ensnarled several high profile celebrities, politicians and institutions. In the weeks before the Act expired, suits were filed against Jamie Foxx, Sean "Diddy" Combs, Cuba Gooding Jr., Bill Cosby and musicians Justin Sane and Axl Rose.

Big name Democrats were also hit with suits, including New York City Mayor Eric Adams, state Sen. Kevin Parker and former Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Columbia University got belted with hundreds of lawsuits, forcing the Ivy to notify some 6,500 patients of former gynecologist Robert A. Hadden; he was first arrested in 2012.

The lawsuit against Cuomo is rich. It was he who championed both the Child Victims Act and the Adult Survivors Act. Even before that he boasted how newly proposed legislation combating sexual harassment in the workplace would serve women's rights. In 2019, he said, "I am very proud that New York is the most aggressive state in the country on women's rights. Anything I can do on sexual harassment we will do."

He even bragged how easy it will be to file such lawsuits, saying that by lowering the bar it will be "easier for those who have been subjected to this disgusting behavior to bring claims forward."

Two years later, a New York Attorney General's report on Gov. Cuomo found that 11 women had been sexually harassed by him for acts that he previously characterized as "disgusting behavior." Investigators interviewed 179 witnesses and what they found was not pretty.

For example, he ran his hand down a woman's spine, kissed her and asked her why she was not wearing a dress. He did this in an elevator in front of other people. Grabbing a woman's butt, putting his hand under a woman's blouse grabbing her breasts—this is how the champion of women's rights treated women.

If Cuomo had not been such a strong proponent of the Child Victims Act, we would not recommend extending the Adult Survivors Act. But with characteristic arrogance and vindictiveness, he worked to extend the Act, knowing full well that it was intended to punish the Catholic Church, not the public schools.

Rapacious attorneys found the Catholic Church to be a much juicer target, both ideologically and financially.

Consider the data: If we compare the volume of claims that were triggered by the Child Victims Act to that of the Adult Survivors Act, it shows who the lawyers were really after:

there were 314,427 lawsuits filed under the former Act and just over 1,000 filed under the latter.

The Child Victims Act was enacted in 2019 and then extended in 2020 for another year, citing Covid. That statute expired in 2021. Not to extend for one year the Adult Survivors Act would be to tolerate a dual system of justice: one for Catholics, the other for everyone else.

State Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal, Manhattan Democrats, have said they will explore a permanent change to New York's statute of limitations for sexual assault. That's a bridge too far. But what needs to be done—in the name of fairness—is to extend the Adult Survivors Act for one year.

When the Child Victims Act was being considered for a one-year extension, Hoylman said if the extension is not granted, "adult survivors of child sexual abuse will be further harmed by our legal system." He says he will either seek to explore convincing colleagues of either another extension of the Adult Survivors Act or permanent window.

Let's let him know how important it is not to have disparate treatment of these two laws. We will contact all lawmakers in Albany.

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