

OHIO REPORTING BILL MUST PROTECT CONFESSIONAL

Bills are pending in Ohio that would require members of the clergy to report suspected cases of child abuse to the authorities. One of those bills, the one introduced by Sen. Robert Spada, would protect the sanctity of the confessional. But there is another bill, introduced by Rep. Lance Mason, that would not allow for the priest-penitent privilege.

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote today to every member of the Ohio House expressing the Catholic League's misgivings over any bill that would sacrifice the confidentiality of the confessional. He offered the following rationale for his position:

"All across the nation we have asked state legislators not to compromise the Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation. We have been very pleased with the results overall. Once lawmakers realize how central this sacrament is to Catholics, they almost always vote to respect the priest-penitent privilege. They should do so in Ohio as well and not just for constitutional reasons: there is no evidence that attempts to break the seal of the confessional would do anything to curtail child abuse. In short, it is a red herring and needs to be labeled as such.

"The Catholic League urges all Ohio lawmakers to embrace the bill introduced by Sen. Spada. We commend Sen. Spada, the Catholic Conference of Ohio and the Ohio Council of Churches for their efforts in preserving religious liberty."