

PA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEFENSIVE REACTION

On September 21, attorneys for the Catholic League filed an Application for Leave *amicus curiae* brief in the Western District of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania regarding the political machinations of the state's attorney general, Josh Shapiro. His decision to target the Catholic Church in a grand jury investigation of the sexual abuse of minors—giving a pass to all other private and public institutions—warranted the filing. Shapiro's defensive reaction to the brief is problematic on several levels.

An article in the September 23 edition of *The Morning Call*, an Allentown newspaper, says that Shapiro's spokesman, Joe Grace, is contending that the attorney general's office investigates "child sexual abuse and all sexual abuse wherever they find it in Pennsylvania, without fear or favor."

In fact, Shapiro's office has not conducted a grand jury investigation of the clergy of any religion, save for Catholicism. Nor has he launched a probe of the public schools. No one can maintain that sexual abuse does not exist in any of these entities.

According to the reporter, Christine Schiavo, the attorney general's office argues that it has filed charges against "a police chief, a deputy coroner and seven Lackawanna County prison guards, and has secured the convictions of Penn State officials" related to the investigation of Jerry Sandusky, the former assistant football coach who was convicted in 2012 for sexually assaulting 10 boys.

In any of these cases, did Shapiro tell the defendants they should give up their rights to defend themselves? Did he say that their right to present a defense was evidence of their

guilt or an attempt to cover-up their guilt? Or does he just tell this to priests? Why were there no press conferences attendant to any of these cases? Why does he save his grandstanding for the Catholic community?

Regarding the prison guards, why didn't Shapiro launch a grand jury investigation into every prison in the state? How could he possibly know if other prison guards were assaulting prisoners without a probe? He didn't have to go after six Catholic dioceses because of an offender at one Catholic high school, but he did. Why? Why the double standard?

The Penn State University matter is laughable. The grand jury investigation of Penn State began in 2009 under Attorney General Tom Corbett. It concluded on November 4, 2011 when the report was released. Shapiro had nothing to do with any of it—he took office on January 17, 2017.

If this is the best Shapiro can do, it is a pitiful showing. This is hardly the end of this issue. Bet on it.