

# POLITICS OF SEX ABUSE IN COLORADO

Colorado state house member Gwyn Green introduced two separate bills—one for private institutions and another for public institutions—regarding lawsuits involving the sexual abuse of children. In February, the league put out two news releases calling out Rep. Green's legislation. Our releases noted that Rep. Green made it easier to sue private institutions, but essentially gave public schools a pass. With this legislation, Rep. Green showed similarities to George Wallace: a public official who promoted the invidious doctrine of "separate but equal."

If passed, this is what Rep. Green's bills would do: (a) if Johnny was abused last year in the Catholic schools—or was abused 50 years ago—the school can be sued, but if Johnny was abused in a public school over the same period, his parents are denied the right to sue (b) if Johnny is abused next year in a Catholic school, his parents can sue, but if Johnny is abused next year in a public school, the only way his parents can sue is if the school failed to conduct a background check of the teacher (c) if Johnny is abused in a Catholic school, it is possible—under the provision of 'vicarious liability'—to sue the principal as well as the diocese, but if Johnny is abused in a public school, neither the principal nor the superintendent of schools can be sued, and (d) if Johnny is abused in a Catholic school, there is no monetary limit on what it can be sued for, but if Johnny is abused in a public school, the most the school must pay is \$150,000.

Two years ago similar legislation was introduced that specifically targeted private institutions, such as the Catholic Church, while public institutions were given a pass. When it was exposed that this was nothing more than a witch-hunt, public schools were blanketed with the same legislation.

After that legislation was introduced, the Colorado education establishment effectively killed the bill, realizing that it would be placed under the same microscope that private institutions were. For the record, Colorado bishops, led by Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput (as well as the Catholic League), favored the bill as long as it was inclusive of all institutions.

When interviewed, Rep. Green has worn her Catholicism on her sleeve, but has smeared her religion in the next breath. She knew that the Colorado bishops have never opposed bills that treated all institutions equally when she remarked, "I think it's really ironic that the leaders of a church that profess to follow Jesus would be working against the protection of children." She made this statement knowing that it was a lie and never apologized for it.

In one of our news releases we also noted that Rep. Green has a 100% approval rating from Planned Parenthood. She is one of the only Catholic lawmakers that we know of—in any state—that received this notorious score. We also noted that she is quite proud of that score as it is the only endorsement that is highlighted on her website. Along with Planned Parenthood's glowing score, she is endorsed by NARAL Pro-Choice, undercutting her so-called commitment to the protection of children.

After the league contacted Colorado lawmakers asking them to nix Green's politicized effort, we received both support and opposition. Rep. Morgan Carroll claimed that our releases on Rep. Green hurt our credibility and made the Catholic League look like we were "about politics over policy." Bill Donohue responded:

"One of your colleagues makes a libelous remark about the Catholic Church, wears her Catholicism on her sleeve, boasts of her support from the abortion industry and introduces a bill that discriminates in its application against private

institutions vis-à-vis public institutions, and you have the gall to lecture me about politics? No wonder the American people hold politicians in such a low regard. You are Exhibit A."

The U.S. Supreme Court said in its 1954 *Brown* decision that "separate but equal" was "inherently unequal." Nothing has changed since, no matter whether the bigotry was based on race or religion. It is morally and legally indefensible to have one law for Catholic-school teachers and another law for public school teachers, especially in regards to the protection of children.

We are happy to note that State Sen. Dave Schultheis has pledged his "full support" for our position if the bill gets to the senate.