

POSTPONING VOTE ON HOUSE CHAPLAIN BUYS TIME

Today the full House was scheduled to vote on the selection of the new House Chaplain. But House Speaker Dennis Hastert has postponed the vote until next month.

Catholic League president William Donohue voiced his concerns over this decision today:

“Since Christmas we have known that the full House was scheduled to vote on the House Chaplain on January 27. But now the vote has been postponed until next month. Yet if there were no improprieties involved in the selection process, why postpone the vote? And if there were problems, what is accomplished by moving the vote?

“House Speaker Dennis Hastert now wants to introduce his choice of Rev. Charles Wright to key players in both parties behind closed doors (joining Hastert was House Majority Leader Dick Armey). Why? Buying time is what politicians do when they’re nervous. More important, buying time simply skirts the central issue, and that issue is justice. All that matters is whether Father Timothy O’Brien was treated fairly. More accurately, nothing else *should* matter.

“Once again it is being reported in *Roll Call* that Hastert knew that Father O’Brien was the top choice of the bipartisan selection committee. If this was the case, then both Hastert and Armey need to explain why they could not in good conscience vote for Father O’Brien, knowing that he was the only candidate who received a majority of the votes from both parties. And then they can explain to their colleague, House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, why he was wrong in selecting Father O’Brien as well.

“They can change the vote but they can’t change history. If

they really want to deal squarely with this issue, perhaps they ought to invite Father O'Brien to one of their closed door meetings. Good luck."