

# RELIGIOUS TEST APPLIED TO BILL PRYOR

On June 11, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold hearings on the nomination of Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor to the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. The Catholic League is concerned that a quasi-religious test is being applied to Pryor. William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, explained the organization's position today:

"Bill Pryor's personal moral beliefs, rooted in Roman Catholicism, should play no role whatsoever in deciding his qualifications for the circuit court of appeals. Unfortunately, there is evidence that he is being subjected to a veiled religious test.

"Those opposed to the nomination of Bill Pryor are not guilty of applying *ade jure* religious test to his nomination. But they are guilty of applying a *de facto* religious test. Take, for example, abortion. It is no secret that Pryor's personal convictions are also the convictions of Catholicism. But he also understands that civil law must be guided by precedent. So when a broadly-written Alabama law surfaced that banned partial-birth abortions, Pryor noted the statute's unconstitutionality and advised state officials not to enforce it. In short, he is utterly capable of making critical distinctions between civil and ecclesiastical law.

"But this is of no consequence to his opponents: they still object to him because of his personal animus to abortion. Thus have they created a quasi-religious test. They may as well post a sign saying, 'No Catholics Need Apply' (save, of course, for dissident Catholics).

"This is an intolerable condition. To apply a judicial filter that screens for practicing Catholics is to institute a *de*

*facto* religious test that is every bit as unconstitutional as a *de jure* application. Indeed, its veiled nature makes it all the more invidious.

“The Catholic League urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to condemn all religious tests for public office, no matter how they are executed.”