

SELECTIVE “VICTIMS” BILL RESURRECTED

Over the past several years, New York State Assemblywoman Margaret A. Markey of Queens has introduced legislation that would address the sexual abuse of minors. There's one problem, though, with her proposals: her bills focus unfairly on private institutions, while they leave abuse in the public institutions virtually untouched. This year's version of her bill offers no change; it would open up a one-year window for alleged victims who were abused in a private institution regardless of when it took place. At the same time, however, it changes nothing for a victim who was abused in a public school even as recently as Thanksgiving (the victim has only ninety days in which to report the abuse).

On March 8th, Markey held a rally in Manhattan outside City Hall in an attempt to persuade the public. It is interesting to note, however, that the roster of speakers at the press conference does not include anyone from the Department of Education. Doing so would open Assemblywoman Markey up to questions that she does not want to answer. One question would be this: why is it that a private school student who had his crotch grabbed by a janitor a quarter century ago has greater rights than a public school student who was abused by a teacher only a few months ago.

The Catholic League contacted Assemblywoman Markey's office earlier this year to discuss the discrepancy in her bill, asking for clarification—we never heard back. The reason is simple. Markey doesn't want to answer the big question: why is there a disparate treatment of private and public institutions? Note: in 2009, after months of protest by the Catholic League, Markey amended her bill to cover both public and private institutions, but it was quickly shot down by public school groups.

Those who are interested in true justice should support the legislation that's been introduced by Assemblyman Michael Cusick, which does not discriminate between public and private institutions. His bill treats all alleged victims equally regardless of wherever the abuse occurred. Markey's selective approach to child sexual abuse, on the other hand, leaves a large proportion of victims still seeking justice.