

SEN. LEAHY STALLS ON JUDGE CONRAD

Today in Washington, Sen. Arlen Specter, the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, will lead a press conference urging Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy to schedule a hearing on the nomination of Judge Robert Conrad to the Fourth Circuit.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why he supports Sen. Specter in this effort:

“On May 21, I wrote to Sen. Leahy imploring him to schedule a vote on the merits of Judge Conrad’s qualifications for a seat on the Fourth Circuit. No one from his staff has replied.

“My reason for writing has to do with the entirely spurious accusation against Judge Conrad that he is anti-Catholic. It is not anti-Catholic for a Catholic, such as Judge Conrad, to merely criticize another Catholic. His criticism of Sister Helen Prejean in 1999 was hardly a bigoted attack—it was an opinion, fairly expressed, about her depiction of the clergy. We at the Catholic League have long distinguished between disagreement and disparagement about matters Catholic; only the latter is a problem. Believe me, if we thought that Judge Conrad had crossed the line, we would have said so long ago. But he has not.

“Sen. Leahy should be particularly careful when he buys into the charge that Judge Conrad is anti-Catholic. Just last year when he was asked to comment on Pope Benedict XVI’s criticism of Brazilian Catholic pro-abortion politicians, the Catholic Democrat said, ‘I’ve always thought also that those bishops and archbishops who for decades hid pederasts and are now being protected by the Vatican should be indicted.’

“This is not only an odd segue to the issue Sen. Leahy was

asked to address, it reveals an ugly animus. Yet I hasten to add that the Catholic League did not charge Sen. Leahy with being anti-Catholic for making this untoward remark. Ergo, he should apply our standard to Judge Conrad. It's time to give Judge Conrad the hearing he deserves."