

SEXUAL ABUSE OF STUDENTS EXPLODES; PUBLIC OFFICIALS ASKED TO RESPOND

In a recent edition of *Education Week*, there was an article by Caroline Hendrie, "Sexual Abuse by Educators is Scrutinized," that suggested that the degree of sexual abuse in the public schools is at a crisis level.

Hofstra University professor Charol Shakeshaft was commissioned by the Bush administration to do a literature search of existing studies on this subject; this was to be the groundwork upon which a national study would be launched. She concluded that "the physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests." The article also says that there are no plans at this time to conduct the national study.

William Donohue immediately took action. Here is how he framed the issue for the media:

"I have written U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige urging him to authorize a national study of the problem of sexual abuse in the public schools. I have also asked him to put Professor Charol Shakeshaft in charge of the study. The provision in the No Child Left Behind program that mandated such a study should not be dismissed by education department officials who would prefer not to deal with this issue. I have also recommended to Secretary Paige the establishment of a national database on the sexual abuse of students.

"I have also written to all the state attorneys general. 'Given that many attorneys general throughout the U.S. were impelled to subpoena the personnel files of priests,' I said, 'it is only just that the personnel files of teachers be subpoenaed as well. Not to do so would smack of selective

indignation—even prejudice—and that is not something the citizenry would approve.'

"Where is the media in all this? Isn't it news that the number of public school students who have been abused by a school employee is more than 100 times greater than the number of minors who have been abused by priests? All those reporters, columnists, talking heads, attorneys general, D.A.'s, psychologists and victims groups who were so quick on the draw to get priests have a moral obligation to pursue this issue to the max. If they don't, they're a fraud."

Though we have yet to hear from Secretary Paige, members will be happy to know that we received dozens of letters from state attorneys general. Whether they act on our recommendation is another matter altogether.