

“SPRINGER OPERA” DRAWS FIRE; TRUMP ASKED TO ACT

On the day that “Jerry Springer: The Opera” debuted in New York, the Catholic League held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Joining Bill Donohue were Brent Bozell of the Media Research Council, Dr. Deal Hudson of the Christian Review, and Ralph Reed of the Faith and Freedom Coalition; Bozell serves on the advisory board of the Catholic League, Hudson is a member of the board of directors, and Reed is an influential evangelical. All spoke about their concerns and what they were going to do about it.

The seriousness of this obscene assault on Christians, and the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funds the entity behind the play, merited a multi-level response: Donohue wrote to President Donald Trump, the House and Senate subcommittees that have authority over the NEA, and Dr. Jane Chu, chairman of the NEA. See pp. 4-9.

Donohue focused on two central issues: a) the propriety of using federal dollars to help underwrite the New Group, the production company that hosted the “Springer Opera,” and b) the need to appoint a new chairman of the NEA.

Regarding the first concern, Donohue made it clear that if it is wrong to use public monies to promote religion, then it must also be wrong to denigrate religion. To be specific, it is wholly unjust to force taxpayers to tolerate government censorship of the Ten Commandments on public property while at the same time forcing them to pay for attacks on Christianity.

President Trump asked the Congress to cut all funding to the NEA, but he was overridden by both the House and the Senate. This is one reason why Donohue took a different strategy: he

asked the president to nominate a morally responsible person to succeed Chu, whose term ends in June. Trump is expected to name her replacement soon; his choice must be confirmed by the Senate.

Chu and Donohue exchanged letters, explaining their respective positions; the tone was professional. However, Chu's refusal to even address the bigoted nature of the musical was inexcusable.

The New York media largely ignored the play, but our campaign did draw good Internet coverage. Also, Donohue spent an hour discussing this with Deal Hudson on his Ave Maria radio program.

We are most grateful to the coverage that Raymond Arroyo's EWTN show, "The World Over," gave to the press conference.

We look forward to President Trump's nominee to succeed Chu. We are delighted to play the lead role in nudging him to do the right thing.