

CATHOLIC LEAGUE SUPPORTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AMENDMENT

On July 23, Catholic League president William Donohue will testify before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the House Committee on the Judiciary on a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Religious Freedom Amendment, which is being proposed by Congressman Henry Hyde, reads as follows: "In order to secure the right of the people to acknowledge and serve God according to the dictates of conscience, neither the United States nor any State shall deny any person equal access to a benefit, or otherwise discriminate against any person, on account of religious belief, expression or exercise. This amendment does not authorize government to coerce or inhibit religious belief, expression or exercise."

William Donohue explained why the Catholic League is backing the amendment:

"The central reason why the Catholic League is endorsing the Religious Freedom Amendment is quite simple: we believe that in the past few decades a number of court decisions and administrative orders have been passed that are inimical to religious freedom, the result of which has been a diminution of First Amendment guarantees. We do not seek to amend the First Amendment, rather we seek to restore the status quo ante, that is the condition that was outlined by the Framers of the Constitution and was found acceptable by the courts for most of our nation's history. In short, we want our rights back.

"There is nothing in the amendment that would coerce anyone from observing any religion, and that is how it should be. What we are looking for is not special treatment but an end to the two-class system we have at the moment where secular expression is given preferential treatment over religious

expression.”

Donohue will offer several examples of governmental bias against religious expression in his testimony.

The Catholic League is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends individual Catholics and the institutional Church from defamation and discrimination.

CATHOLIC PROFESSOR QUILTS JEWISH POST UNDER PRESSURE

Thomas E. Bird, a professor at Queens College, has resigned under pressure as the new director of the college’s Jewish studies program. Though Bird received the support of many prominent Jews, and has a distinguished record of accomplishment serving Jewish causes, he felt that he was “the object of primitive religious bigotry” and decided to resign. At question was whether a non-Jew should serve as the head of the Jewish studies program.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this development today:

“The president of Queens College, Allen Sessoms, has described what happened to Professor Bird as ‘shameful’ and labeled the move against him as ‘a campaign of intolerance.’ It would appear that President Sessoms is right.

“A legitimate argument can be made that in certain academic programs it makes sense to give considerable weight to the ascribed characteristics of candidates seeking to direct the program. But insistence on a litmus test is not acceptable,

and that is precisely what Professor Bird's critics are arguing. If a Catholic can be summarily challenged on the basis of his Catholicity from directing a Jewish studies program, what is to stop the displacement of merit from other academic posts? This refeudalization is at odds with academic excellence and that is reason enough to oppose it."

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