

CHRISTIANS EXCLUDED IN NYC SCHOOLS: COUNCILMAN AVELLA SEEKS TO END DISCRIMINATION

Yesterday, New York City Council Member Tony Avella introduced his Department of Education Holiday Display Resolution (Reso. 930/2007). Avella's bill calls for a nativity scene to appear alongside the menorah and crescent and star in New York City schools. Currently, the schools allow only a Christmas tree, a secular symbol of the Christian holiday, to stand in its winter holiday displays. On Sunday, Avella held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to discuss this resolution. He was joined by Catholic League president Bill Donohue, Brian Rooney of the Thomas More Law Center, representatives from the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Knights of Columbus and Andrea Skoros, the plaintiff who first brought this injustice to the courts. They were flanked by a big crowd of supporters.

Commenting on Avella's bill is Bill Donohue:

"Though a federal appeals court upheld the legality of excluding a crèche, the court disagreed with the city's claim that the menorah and the star and crescent are secular symbols and added, 'We do not here decide whether the City could, consistent with the Constitution, include a crèche in its holiday displays.' Accordingly, it is up to the Department of Education to decide whether to treat Christian students with the same respect it shows students of other faiths.

"Councilman Avella's bill calls on the Department of Education to practice inclusion and end discrimination against students adhering to the Christian faith. Councilman Jimmy Oddo has agreed to be a co-sponsor of the bill, which was submitted to the Education Committee. Avella is currently seeking

additional co-sponsors.

“We salute Tony Avella and Jimmy Oddo for their efforts, and we are eager to see how all the other councilmen will react to this resolution.”

Write to Councilman Robert Jackson, chair of the Education Committee, by visiting http://www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/email_form.cfm?con_id=76.

BUFFALO CITY COUNCIL’S FORAY IN TYRANNY

The Buffalo City Council passed a resolution yesterday that accused the Diocese of Buffalo of “ethnic cleansing.” The diocese has decided to close some city churches and schools, and it was this decision that led Council President David A. Franczyk to charge that some neighborhoods were being abandoned, giving off “the whiff of ethnic cleansing.” He also said that if the Catholic Church is having financial problems, it should consider selling the Vatican.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue weighed in today:

“What happened yesterday will go down in history as one of the most egregious examples of Catholic bashing ever to be voiced by a government entity in the U.S. Even if the language were not inflammatory and patently bigoted—which it undeniably is—there is still a church and state problem: The Buffalo City Council has no business sticking its nose into the internal

affairs of the Catholic Church. If Buffalo Bishop Edward U. Kmiec were to pass judgment on the affairs of the City of Buffalo (which he wouldn't), he'd be labeled a tyrant. That's what Franczyk and his colleagues are—tyrants.

“Dioceses all over the nation look at the changing demographics and make tough decisions regarding church and school closings, as well as openings. They don't need any lectures from government bureaucrats on what to do. And they certainly don't need to hear the kind of hate speech they heard yesterday. The same city council that wouldn't dream of giving Catholic parents a dime to support school vouchers—which would help to keep the schools open—has the audacity to bash the bishop over something it has no legal or moral ground to stand on. It is a disgrace.

“We have contacted lawyers about the possibility of filing a lawsuit against the Buffalo City Council. We have lots of members there—getting standing is not a problem—and the Thomas More Law Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan may have an interest in doing the litigation. Together, we sued the City of San Francisco last year over a similar issue.”

Contact Franczyk at dfranczyk@city-buffalo.com

PRESS CONFERENCE

Who: Tony Avella, New York City Councilman

Bill Donohue, Catholic League
President

Ladies of the Ancient Order of
Hibernians Representative

Brian Rooney, Thomas More Law Center

When: Sunday, June 24, 2007; 1:00 p.m.

Where: Steps of City Hall

Why: To support Councilman Avella's resolution calling for the display of a crèche

alongside a menorah and crescent and star in New York City schools.

JUSTICE IN DELAWARE AND MICHIGAN: TEACHERS AND MUSLIMS ARE A PROTECTED CLASS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today as follows:

"In Delaware, a bill was passed yesterday that eliminates the two-year statute of limitations in cases involving the sexual molestation of minors. But the law does not apply equally to the public sector. Sen. Karen Peterson, the principal sponsor of the bill, took umbrage at our charge that unequal justice is at work. Yet today she is quoted as saying that the bill allows victims to sue the state *if* they can meet the high standard of 'gross negligence.' How sweet. She further admits that the state has the right to claim sovereign immunity, and that it is up to the courts to decide whether it should apply. Thus did she verify our charge that there are two standards in play.

"Yesterday, Rep. Greg Lavelle, who is sponsoring a bill that

would mandate an equal playing field, called our office requesting data on public school teachers who abuse kids. Today he is quoted as saying our response 'offended' him. Indeed, he even went so far as to commend his colleagues for taking 'all necessary steps to be sure that all children in Delaware are protected regardless of where they go to school...' Really? That being the case, he should withdraw his bill. To top it off, a lobbyist for the Diocese of Wilmington chimed in by criticizing the Catholic League. It remains to be seen how Catholic officials will react when the lawsuits start coming and the public school teachers get to walk. Must be a tight-knit club in Delaware.

"Meanwhile, as we pointed out on June 5, Michigan taxpayers are being forced to pay \$25,000 for footbaths so that Muslim students can exercise their religious right to wash their feet. Not only is the ACLU defending this, so is Fox News regular Geraldo Rivera. He conceded last night that there are church and state problems, but then waxed sentimental over the allegedly besieged Muslims. In the end, he could not bring himself to criticize the privileged position afforded Muslims vis-à-vis others.

"The elites have shown their real colors and it's not a pretty sight. Dishonesty, cowardice and bigotry make for a really sick stew."

**CHILD RAPE IN DELAWARE:
PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS GET A**

PASS

House lawmakers in Delaware approved a bill yesterday that eliminated the two-year statute of limitations for victims of child sex abuse, but it does not apply to public school teachers. An attempt by Rep. Greg Lavelle to pass an amendment waiving immunity for government workers failed (he will try again). The bill now goes back to the Senate. Leading the charge to protect the teachers is Sen. Karen Peterson.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

“The degree of corruption in the Delaware legislature is matched only by the selective indignation its lawmakers have for child rape. The legislators are owned—lock, stock and barrel—by the teachers unions. Teachers can grope all they want. They can rape little kids. And now they will be protected by making it harder to prosecute them. Yet the most reliable data on this subject, presented by Dr. Charol Shakeshaft of Hofstra University, show that public school employees have the highest rate of child sexual abuse in the nation.

“This sick game was tried last year in Colorado. Three bills were introduced trying to stick it to private institutions while giving public ones a pass; thanks to public pressure, they did not succeed. When a bill was introduced that would blanket all institutions equally, one of the lawmakers owned by the teachers unions called the Catholic Church’s bluff and said the bishops wouldn’t support it. He was wrong. And so why did the bills fail? Not because of resistance from the Catholic Church, but because of the teachers unions.

“If there were a law that said Catholic teachers should get immunity from a bill that makes it easier to sue them for child sex abuse cases, there would be screaming and yelling the likes of which we’ve never heard before. But when public

school teachers get the green light, all is well in the bowels of the legislature. We are contacting the lawmakers today.”

Support Rep. Lavelle: Greg.Lavelle@state.de.us. This is a national issue. And let his chief opponent know what you think: Karen.Peterson@state.de.us

ROBIN WILLIAMS' SICK IDEA OF HUMOR

Last night on the “Tonight Show with Jay Leno,” comedian Robin Williams plugged his upcoming movie, “License to Wed.” In the film, Williams plays a Protestant minister who forces an engaged couple to go through a grueling marriage preparatory course. But last night Williams went off on Catholic priests, painting them all as pedophiles.

Williams pretended to be playing a game where the pedophile is hidden under a cup. “Here we go. Find the priest, find the pedophile. Find the priest, find the pedophile. Here you go right now. Move ‘em around, move ‘em around. Oh, you found the pedophile.”

Williams then put his hand over his groin, saying, “You have to realize that if you are a Catholic priest, you have retired this. That’s it—no more sex.” Then he took a shot at confession: “But they are going to put you in a small dark box and people are going to tell you the nastiest sexual stuff they have done.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Isaiah Washington lashes out at one gay person in private, and he is banished from ‘Grey’s Anatomy.’ Robin Williams lashes out against all priests in public, and he suffers no consequence. To top it off, Williams suggests that most molesting priests are pedophiles, when in fact they are homosexuals. But to make a joke about gay priests could get him into trouble. So it’s better to lie. This is justice–Hollywood style.

“One more thing: in an interview with MoviesOnline, Robin Williams recently said that ‘you can’t poke fun at certain religions,’ noting that ‘we just made major fun of the Catholic Church but hey, they don’t blow you up.’ So not only is Williams a bigot and a liar, he’s a coward. No wonder he’s so well received in Tinseltown.”

NYC DEPT. OF EDUCATION GETS IT WRONG: CRECHES ARE NOT BANNED FROM THE SCHOOLS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explained today why he is upset with the New York City Department of Education for misrepresenting a federal appeals court decision on the display of crèches in the schools.

At a press conference on Sunday, June 24, on the steps of City Hall (1:00 p.m.), City Council member Tony Avella will introduce his resolution calling for inclusion of nativity scenes in the schools. He will be joined by a contingent from the Catholic League and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Queens County.

Donohue addressed the issue as follows

“The New York City Department of Education needs a new spokesperson. Marge Feinberg is quoted in today’s *New York Sun* defending the City’s discriminatory policy of allowing menorahs and crescents and stars in the public schools, while banning nativity scenes. ‘We only allow secular symbols and that decision has been upheld by the courts,’ she said. Feinberg is wrong. Last year, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit found that the United States District Court had erred when it agreed with the New York City Department of Education’s policy declaring the Jewish and Islamic religious symbols to be secular in nature. The court ruled that ‘the policy mischaracterizes the menorah as a secular symbol’ and that the ‘same conclusion applies to the policy’s treatment of the star and crescent.’

“The appeals court said that while the menorah and crescent and star are religious symbols, it is not unconstitutional to display a secular symbol, namely the Christmas tree, for Christians. But it hastened to add, ‘We do not here decide whether the City could, consistent with the Constitution, include a crèche in its holiday displays.’

“In other words, it is up to the City of New York to decide whether it will practice inclusion and treat Christian religious symbols the same way it treats Jewish and Islamic ones. That’s the issue.”

MUSLIMS SHOULD CONDEMN MUSLIM VIOLENCE

According to today's *New York Sun*, Harvard professor Jessica Stern told a New York audience yesterday that criticism of Muslim clerics for not condemning Muslim violence was unwarranted. "I've heard a lot of bashing of Muslim clerics for not stepping up to the plate and condemning extremist violence," she said. "But Catholic priests are not stepping up to condemn those who kill abortion doctors...[and] rabbis are not condemning the violent settlers' movement."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"Forced moral equivalency is immoral, and that is exactly what Jessica Stern is promoting. The silence of Muslim clerics in the face of Muslim violence is well-known. But when it comes to killing abortionists, the Catholic clergy have an impeccable record. It should be noted, too, that as the *New York Sun* pointed out today, rabbis everywhere condemned Yigal Amir's 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin—the very incident that Stern cited as an example of Jewish silence.

"To begin with, there has not been a single abortionist killed in the U.S. since 1998. When there were killings in the mid-1990s, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, chairman of the Pro-Life Activities of the bishops' conference, said that such shootings make 'a mockery of everything we stand for.' When there were two killings at Massachusetts abortion clinics, Cardinal Bernard Law not only denounced them, he ordered a moratorium on sidewalk protest vigils outside abortion clinics in Boston. Cardinal John O'Connor's response in New York was profound: 'If anyone has an urge to kill an abortionist, kill me instead.'

“Just this week, a report of Muslim violence against Iraqi Christians was released. The study, *Incipient Genocide*, describes in detail ‘the deaths of Christian children—including babies—laypeople, priests and nuns who were burned, beaten or blown up in car bombs throughout the past few years.’ Moreover, Christian girls are being raped and having nitric acid thrown in their faces for not wearing veils. And the Muslim silence is deafening.”

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN SPONSORS RELIGION; STATE SEN. GILDA Z. JACOBS DEFENDS IT

Last week, Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote to Michigan lawmakers regarding news reports that the University of Michigan-Dearborn is planning to spend \$25,000 for footbaths so that Muslim students can practice their religion more easily. Of the lawmakers who have responded thus far, only one has defended this arrangement, State Sen. Gilda Z. Jacobs.

Jacobs told Donohue “it has been made clear to me that this is less a religious issue and more a health and safety issue.” She said currently Muslim students use “bathroom sinks” to wash their feet. She also said that the footbaths are being paid for by student tuition payments and not “the taxpayer-funded General Fund.” She further defended this policy by saying the school’s academic calendar accommodates Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter, and Jewish students are allowed to reschedule exams originally scheduled for Saturdays. She mentioned that the U.S. Postal Service does not

have regular mail delivery on Sundays and that alcohol cannot be bought in Michigan on Sunday mornings.

Donohue responded as follows:

“Remedial education can resolve the problem of not knowing the difference between a shower stall and a sink, but education is no cure for dishonesty. Money is fungible, and that is why it is disingenuous for Jacobs to say that the taxpayers are not paying for the footbaths. Furthermore, every example Jacobs cited as analogous to funding the footbaths involves accommodation of religion—not sponsorship.

“Interestingly, Jacobs was only one of two senators to vote against a bill in 2004 allowing religious and divinity students to win publicly funded scholarships. Jacobs said she was opposed to ‘funding of seminaries.’

“Jacobs ends her letter to me by saying that she hopes ‘religious intolerance’ is not motivating critics of this scheme. We hope her defense of religious discrimination is based on ignorance and not malice. And we urge Catholics to take note of her duplicity.”

BIGOTRY MARKS DEBATE OVER CALIFORNIA ASSISTED-SUICIDE BILL

The California assembly is expected to vote next week on a bill that would allow doctors to provide a lethal drug dose to patients who have less than six months to live, are mentally competent and have requested the drug; they would administer

it themselves. In the course of the debate over this bill, anti-Catholic bigotry has flared. Addressing this issue today is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

“Those who believe in the ethics of assisted suicide should make their case without engaging in unethical conduct. They have not done so. On radio shows throughout California, commercials placed by Californians for Compassionate Choices have called into question the constitutional right of Catholic clergymen to speak to this issue. These spots mirror the invective employed against Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Cardinal Mahony that appear in the group’s press releases.

“On May 7, Compassionate Choices said, ‘How can lawmakers follow the dictates of the Catholic Church rather than legislate on behalf of ALL Californians?’ So when Catholic leaders speak out, they’re dictating to lawmakers, but when others speak out, they’re engaging in dialogue. Do even those who voice such nonsense believe what they say? Even worse is the lie, found on the group’s website, that says there is ‘a well-funded pressure campaign to force Vatican dogma on all terminally ill Californians.’ This is pure unadulterated demagoguery, and they know it.

“There is one Catholic that Compassionate Choices likes, and that’s Daniel C. Maguire, the embittered ex-priest theologian from Marquette University. In his letter to the lawmakers, Maguire did what he always does—spin the truth. ‘Catholic theology is broader and more nuanced than Vatican theology,’ he said. So if Vatican theology is not Catholic theology, is it Buddhist? And if the Vatican is not the source of Catholic theology, what is? The musings of Maguire?

“California lawmakers are free to decide what to do, but they also have a moral obligation to denounce bigotry. They should do so without delay.”