

# NY ABUSE BILL STALLS: PUBLIC SCHOOLS STILL VULNERABLE

The bill by New York State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey that would suspend the statute of limitations for one year for cases of child sexual abuse (victims must be 53 or younger) will not pass this year unless a special session is called and the bill is put to a vote.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on the bill's fate:

Right now it looks like this badly conceived legislation is dead in the water. But were it to pass eventually, I renew my pledge today to spend whatever it takes to alert the residents of New York State of their right to sue the public schools if they were ever sexually abused by one of its employees (provided they meet the conditions outlined in the bill).

Some have questioned my motive. Let me end the suspense: I am fed up with unscrupulous lawyers and their well-greased professional victims' groups seeking to plunder the Catholic Church. Now that public institutions are finally included in the Markey bill, it is only just that potential claimants be informed of their rights. And guess what? A reality check has already taken place. Opposing the Markey bill are the New York State School Boards Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, and other civic groups.

Here's more. An AP story today says 700 public school teachers in New York City are being paid full salaries to sit around doing such things as yoga and playing Scrabble while their cases are being investigated. The accusations include sexual abuse.

Still more. Today's New York *Daily News* has a story about a teacher's aide who was busted for molesting a first grader;

the 6-year old girl is thought to be the third victim of the same employee. And so what have they done to him? He's been reassigned to a desk job.

And people wonder why the Catholic League is pulling out all the stops. Believe me, we will never yield on our pledge.

Contact Markey at [MarkeyM@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:MarkeyM@assembly.state.ny.us)

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## **NYC TO OKAY MUSLIM HOLIDAYS IN SCHOOLS; CATHOLICS STONEWALLED**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the news that the Education Committee of the New York City Council has approved two new Muslim holidays, Eid Ul-Fitr and Eid Ul-Adha, to be added to the school calendar:

On January 14, I testified before this very same committee requesting equal rights for Catholics: Jewish and Islamic religious symbols are displayed in the schools every December, but Christian symbols are banned. With the exception of Councilman Tony Avella, and a few others, the Education Committee showed no interest in appeasing Catholics. But its members are apparently capable of demonstrating great sensitivity to Muslims. Speaker Christine Quinn, who was raised Catholic—and who has shown no interest in the push for parity that the Catholic League wants—is now urging all City Councilmen to vote for this new round of Muslim rights.

What's at work is the politics of multiculturalism: tolerance

for some, intolerance for others. But this fight isn't over yet.

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## COMMON GROUND ON ABORTION?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue speaks to the "On Common Ground" forum that *RHRealityCheck.org* has launched on abortion:

The terms "dialogue" and "common ground" are innocuous enough, and may even convey something benign. But when selectively invoked by ideologues as a political vehicle, they are worse than vacuous—they are devious. Such is the case with the latest effort by *RHRealityCheck.org*.

*RHRealityCheck.org* may have been able to persuade reasonable persons like Steven Waldman of *Beliefnet* to join in this effort, but too many of the announced participants are hardened pro-abortion activists. Moreover, the website demonizes a number of religious conservative groups by labeling them "far right" organizations. It even posts an attack piece on me done at the behest of the nation's most notorious anti-Catholic group, Catholics for Choice; this shell of an organization has twice been condemned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Bad as these aspects of the project are, they are nothing when compared to the vicious denunciations of Crisis Pregnancy Centers. If giving young women an alternative to abortion is considered taboo, then the entire Common Ground project is destined to be an abysmal failure. It also shows that their alleged interest in adoption is a ruse.

Religious conservatives should not only reject offers to

participate in this forum—they should condemn it as a fraud.

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## **ERIC HOLDER ON HATE CRIMES BILL: MASTER OF DEMAGOGUERY**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's remark that we need a new hate crimes bill because of the recent killings in Kansas and Washington, D.C.:

Holder says, "We will not tolerate murder, or the threat of violence, masquerading as political activism." It would be more accurate to say that the U.S. doesn't need a political activist masquerading as Attorney General.

The wife of Scott Roeder, the ex-con who killed abortionist George Tiller, said that while he himself didn't think he was mentally ill, "everyone else did." His brother David agreed with this assessment.

Virginia Gerker, cousin of James von Brunn, the ex-con who killed a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, said that her entire family believed he was mentally ill.

Roeder was never involved in any pro-life organization, and von Brunn is an old man who was as much anti-Christian as he was anti-Semitic. In other words, it is nothing if not demagogic for Holder to exploit these two recent tragedies—committed by madmen, not political activists—as a rationale to promote this highly politicized piece of legislation.

The reason why the Catholic League continues to be concerned

about this bill is due to the fact that we still don't have assurances that religious speech won't be punished if it passes. While it is true that the Senate version has language protecting religious speech, the House version does not. Holder should be spending his time endorsing the Senate version instead of stoking the primordial fears of Obama activists.

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## **PBS RELIGION BAN CARRIES A STENCH**

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) has banned member stations from carrying new religious TV programs; the few existing ones can continue. Catholic League president Bill Donohue reacts to this news:

The stated reason for censoring new religious programming goes like this: (a) a ban on sectarian programming has been in place since 1985 but was never enforced, (b) PBS started to review its rules last year when the transition to digital TV was being contemplated, and (c) PBS expressed concerns that having religious programming may imply official endorsement. None of these reasons is persuasive.

A rule not enforced is a non-starter, much like jay walking statutes in New York—everyone knows that non-enforcement means it's legal. Citing church and state concerns is pure bunk: there is no federal law banning religious programming by PBS. As for the review being sparked by the move to digital, the record shows that more was at work than this.

In December 2005, PBS aired a few shows with mildly religious overtones that angered its anti-religious members. Renee

Fleming sang Christmas songs in between comments made about the importance of Christmas; a three-part documentary retracing the routes taken in the first five books of the Bible, "Walking the Bible," aired; a month later, a documentary with a veneer of religious trappings was shown about two teenagers in rural America who pulled themselves out of poverty; and a year-end Pledge Drive featured Dr. Wayne Dyer, a self-help guru opposed to organized religion who nonetheless carries "spiritual baggage." It was after these shows aired that PBS Ombudsman Michael Getler felt the heat and the in-house conversation began.

It never takes much to push secular buttons, but caving in to the voices of intolerance is shameful. That the religious gag rule is taking place in the age of Obama is not something that has escaped our notice. The stench is unmistakable.

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## **FACTCHECK.ORG      SKEWS      HATE CRIMES   BILL**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue examines the contention of [Factcheck.org](http://Factcheck.org) that the Congressional hate crimes bill does not jeopardize religious speech and does not include pedophilia as a protected class:

In 2007, when the hate crimes bill was being considered, Rep. Louis Gohmert asked Rep. Art Davis whether a minister who preached against sexual relations outside marriage could be held liable for the violent actions of someone who attributed his behavior to the clergyman, Davis did not deny that this could happen. This is what gave rise to the concerns of religious conservatives, something never mentioned by

*Factcheck.org*. Moreover, while there is language in the Senate version of the bill that does afford the kind of constitutional protections that religious conservatives have asked for, it is not certain whether these caveats will be included in the final version.

*Factcheck.org* is correct to say that the “plain meaning” of the term sexual orientation does not include pedophilia, but it is disingenuous to imply that the fears of religious conservatives are therefore without merit. When this subject came up in April in the House Judiciary Committee, an amendment to the hate crimes bill that would have excluded pedophilia from the definition of sexual orientation was defeated by the Democrats along party lines. So why would the Democrats insist on protecting child molesters, treating them as indistinguishable from homosexuals? *Factcheck.org* does not address this issue.

In other words, *Factcheck.org* has skewed the discussion, the effect of which is to make light of the concerns of religious conservatives. Those concerns are rooted in experience and are not the product of conjecture, something a check of the facts easily confirms.

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## HOLOCAUST PARK SHUNS POLISH CATHOLICS

New York City has authorized five new markers in Brooklyn's Holocaust Memorial Park to represent five groups of non-Jews who died in the Holocaust. The new markers are being proposed to honor homosexuals, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, the

disabled and political prisoners. The person behind this campaign is Rick Landman, co-chair of the International Association of Lesbian and Gay Children of Holocaust Survivors. Dov Hikind, a New York State Assemblyman, is strongly opposed to this effort.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue entered the fray today:

Any time a Holocaust memorial does not single out Jews, it is an historical farce: they were the only ethnic group that was exclusively targeted by the Nazis. To that extent, the Holocaust was a Jewish event of monumental significance. But any time Holocaust victims who were not Jewish are simply dismissed altogether, we have another historical farce: Polish Catholics, for example, suffered badly.

Six million Polish citizens were killed in the Holocaust—three million Jews and three million Catholics. Poland was the only country where the Germans gave official death orders for any Pole who helped a Jew. And more Poles were killed for helping Jews than anyone else in the world. The current Broadway play, “Irena’s Vow,” is a dramatic production that accurately tells how Polish Catholics risked their lives to save Jews.

The SS did not take note of the religious affiliation of its prisoners, with the exception of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. But this does not justify dismissing Catholic victims. After all, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum pays tribute to Polish Catholics, and so should all memorials.

To put all Holocaust victims on an equal plane with Jews is wrong, but it is equally wrong to pretend that Catholics, especially those of Polish descent, weren’t among Hitler’s many victims.

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# MARKEY'S BILL RESEMBLES CHOPPED MEAT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on the latest amendment to New York State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey's bill dealing with the sexual abuse of minors:

Just after Markey changed her bill to include public institutions, she chopped her bill up even further by now saying that anyone who wants to file a suit during the one year suspension of the statute of limitations can do so providing he is not over the age of 53. Thus, her bill looks more like chopped meat than a serious piece of legislation. What it tells us is that her initial effort was ill considered. It should be obvious to everyone that Assemblyman Vito Lopez's bill is a viable alternative, one that does not suffer from being on the chopping block.

In the event Markey's bill passes, I repeat what I said on June 4: I will conduct a massive public education campaign alerting the public that they can now sue the public schools if they were abused by a public school employee, even if the incident took place when JFK was president (providing they are not over the age of 53).

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## OKAY TO FUND CHURCHES OVERSEAS; NO MONEY FOR D.C.

# VOUCHERS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on what happened yesterday at the first official meeting of President Obama's Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (the information is taken from a report by the "On Faith" blog site of *Newsweek/Washington Post*):

The only item of real interest to the Catholic League is the agency's commitment to extend foreign aid to such civil institutions as churches, mosques and temples. This is a commendable proposition, but it also smacks of hypocrisy: U.S. taxpayers are expected to foot the bill for religious institutions overseas but there is no money for poor kids down the block from the White House who would like to have a school voucher to attend a Catholic school.

The argument that we have a Constitution to deal with at home is a canard: vouchers are not unconstitutional. Moreover, if helping civil institutions, including religious ones, is a proper goal for the U.S. to pursue abroad, why is it not a proper one to pursue at home? To be sure, constitutional issues must be respected, but the Constitution does not put a straightjacket on the right of government to offer assistance of all kinds to religious institutions. Indeed, the very establishment of this agency is testimony to this point.

In short, if the Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships initiative is to succeed, then it must be judged by what it does at home, as well as abroad.

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# PUBLIC SCHOOL ABUSE VICTIMS IN NY STATE: RELIEF IS ON THE WAY

Paul Vitello has a news story in today's *New York Times* reporting on the decision by New York State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey to amend her bill on the sexual abuse of children. Her previous bill only covered private institutions like the Catholic Church, leaving in place protections afforded public institutions. This led many Catholics to oppose her bill and support the one sponsored by Assemblyman Vito Lopez which treats public and private institutions equally. There is still one major difference between the two bills: Markey's allows for a one year suspension of the statute of limitations, thus permitting anyone to file a claim regardless of when the abuse occurred.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue outlined a new campaign:

The statute of limitations is an integral provision of justice, and that is why the Lopez bill is still preferable to Markey's new one. **But if Markey's bill prevails, the Catholic League will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in a massive public education campaign to alert those who have been sexually abused by a public school employee that they now have one year to sue the schools, even if the abuse took place when JFK was president. We will use every media outlet available.**

Our campaign will be limited to those victimized in public schools. Why? Because up until now, in New York and many other states, lawyers and professional victims' abuse advocates have waged a relentless campaign to exclusively stick it to Catholic institutions, all the while doing positively nothing to help those victimized by public school teachers. To even

the scales of justice, we will now copy-cat their tactics, only the target audience this time will be those molested in the public schools.

Markey is nothing if not dishonest. All along she insisted that her initial bill applied equally to private and public institutions. But if this were true, then there would have been no need to amend it.

Contact Markey at [MarkeyM@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:MarkeyM@assembly.state.ny.us)