

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AFFIRMED



Bill Donohue comments on the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling today in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*:

Today's victory is welcomed by true advocates of the First Amendment. However, because of the unremitting hostility this administration has shown to religious liberty, especially in its lust for abortion rights, Congress needs to pass the Health Care Rights of Conscience Act.

Today's ruling has important implications. It recognizes, for the first time, that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) applies to "closely held" businesses, or corporations owned by a few people. This law prohibits the federal government from any action that substantially burdens the exercise of religion, unless that action is the least restrictive way of serving a compelling government interest.

Practically speaking, the ruling will have a limited effect on private sector employers. The vast majority of Americans work for companies that already provide for most forms of contraceptive coverage, including abortifacients. Nonetheless, this decision will further disable ObamaCare: Over 100 million are already exempt, and now we can add "Hobby Lobby" type businesses to the list. Not for nothing does Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg fear that this ruling may cause "havoc" to ObamaCare. Hope she's right.

Politically speaking, the ruling will have a dramatic effect: it sends an unmistakable message to the Obama administration that it cannot continue to run roughshod over the religious liberty rights of Americans.

Critics of Hobby Lobby have been trotting out horror stories about what will happen if their side loses. Nonsense. RFRA was passed 21 years ago, and no horror stories have been recorded. Scare tactics don't work.

Next up are the Catholic non-profits. We'll win on that one, too, only by a much bigger margin.

JOAN RIVERS RIPS GAY PRIESTS AGAIN



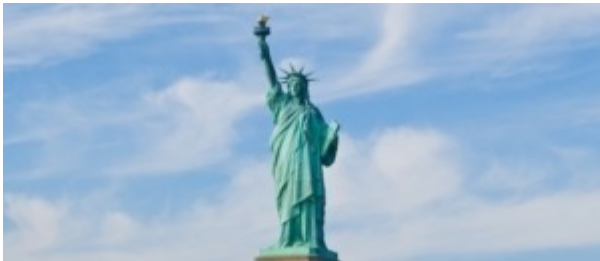
Bill Donohue comments on the June 27 edition of "Fashion Police" on E!:

On Friday night, Joan Rivers remarked on a short plaid skirt worn by Katy Perry: "She is so much a Catholic schoolgirl that three priests stopped her to say, 'you're cute, do you have a brother?'"

There is not a week that goes by that Rivers doesn't attack homosexual priests. Whether she wants to or not, she will be remembered as an old lady turned bigot. What a way to finish her career.

Contact Kira Wagner, director of publicity:

ASSAULT ON FREE SPEECH REJECTED



Bill Donohue comments on the Supreme Court's decision today striking down a Massachusetts law that created a 35-foot buffer zone near clinics for those protesting abortion:

Today's ruling, *McCullen v. Coakley*, did not address the morality or the legality of abortion, which is why this case, which was wholly about free speech, should have been a slam dunk decision for everyone. It was for the high court: it voted 9-0.

So who are those that are opposed to free speech? The ACLU, for one. Every ten years or so it finds a few neo-Nazis or Klansmen to defend, and then convinces elites that it is a champion of free speech. But it takes no courage to defend crackpots who pose no real threat to our liberties. A better test would be for the rabidly pro-abortion ACLU to defend the free speech rights of pro-life advocates. Again and again, it fails to do so. In this case it explicitly remained neutral, filing an amicus brief on both sides. Which means it wasn't neutral on the First Amendment, its *raison d'être*: it flatly rejected it.

The pro-abortion industry was unanimous in its contempt for free speech. Jan Erickson of the National Organization for Women Foundation told us in January what she thinks of

protesters who pray at abortion clinics: “There can be no other way to describe in a single word what antiabortion protesters have engaged in for four decades and that is *terrorism*.” (Her italic.) Her colleague, Terry O’Neill, is just as irrational. She said pro-life protesters “want to be able to grab patients, get in their faces, scream at them that they are immoral, and having an abortion is a mortal sin and a risk to their health, among other falsehoods.”

The good news is that these lying fanatics lost today. But we need to reflect, not relax. Just think for a moment who these people are: Their entire professional life is dedicated to killing unborn babies and killing the First Amendment. So what’s left once life and liberty have been snuffed out?

This is a great day for those who believe in life and liberty, and no one deserves a greater shout-out on these two issues than Nat Hentoff. He has courageously defended these twin freedoms his entire life.

AP’S “MASS GRAVE” RETRACTIONS



Bill Donohue comments on the second retraction by the Associated Press (AP) over Ireland’s “mass grave” story:

AP issued its first retraction on June 20 regarding its stories of June 3 and June 8 on Ireland’s “mass grave” story. On June 23, AP reporter Shawn Pogatchnik issued a second, more complete, retraction; his article was titled, “Media Exaggerated Horror Tale at Irish Orphanage.” Here is an

excerpt of what he said:

“The reports of unmarked graves shouldn’t have come as a surprise to the Irish public, who for decades have known that some of the 10 defunct ‘mother and baby homes,’ which chiefly housed the children of unwed mothers, held grave sites with forgotten dead. The religious orders’ use of unmarked graves reflected the crippling poverty of the time, the infancy of most of the victims, and the lack of plots in cemeteries corresponding to the children’s fractured families.”

“Contrary to the allegation of widespread starvation highlighted in some reports, only 18 children were recorded as suffering from severe malnutrition. While publicly available records are incomplete, sporadic inspection reports indicate that the orphanage’s population exceeded 250 throughout the worst years of child mortality, when overcrowding would have encouraged the spread of infection.”

AP admits that it was guilty of “repeating incorrect Irish news reports that suggested the babies who died had never been baptized and that Catholic Church teaching guided priests not to baptize the babies of unwed mothers or give to them Christian burials. The reports of the denial of baptism later were contradicted by the Tuam Archdiocese, which found a registry showing that the home had baptized more than 2,000 babies.”

AP had the courage to admit it erred. We need to hear from other media outlets as well. And we await Andrew Sullivan’s apology for accusing the nuns of running a “death camp,” and asking the pope to shut them down.

IRELAND'S "MASS GRAVE" HOAX



Over the past month, the public has been treated to a series of news stories alleging that Irish nuns threw almost 800 babies into a septic tank outside a home for "fallen women" and

children in the 20th century. As it turns out, the "mass grave" story is a hoax.

To read Bill Donohue's article, "Ireland's 'Mass Grave' Hysteria," click [here](#). It is being widely distributed in Ireland, England, and the United States.

SCHOOL THAT BLOCKED WEBSITES FAILS AGAIN



Bill Donohue comments on a letter released by the School Board for District 14 in Connecticut about the decision to block student access to the Vatican's website, as well as

those deemed to be conservative:

This situation has gone from bad to worse. Now the Board of Ed is telling us that no one deliberately decided to block the websites. After consulting with the filtering service provider, Dell SonicWALL, the board concluded that the problem "was a function of how the parameters were set in the filtering criteria, and we are confident it has been

remedied.” In other words, it was Dell’s fault.

No one with half a brain believes this to be true. Dell sure doesn’t. Here is what it said: “A school had a policy [Nonnewaug High School] to block a category of sites rated as Politics/Advocacy Groups at their site using our content filtering product. It’s important to note that our product does not come with that category turned on. The school actively turned it on.”

Blocking the Vatican website, and the others, was the result of a conscious effort to censor the First Amendment rights of students. The person, or persons, responsible should be fired.

Contact the Connecticut Commissioner of Education, Stefan Pryor: stefan.pryor@ct.gov

NEW SCHOOL RELIGION LAW IN NORTH CAROLINA



Bill Donohue welcomes the new school religion law in North Carolina:

Yesterday, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed into law a bill that protects the religious liberty rights of teachers, school personnel, and students. It passed 106-9 in the House, and by a margin of 48-1 in the Senate. Religious freedom, including voluntary student-led prayer, is now secured.

Nothing in the law is coercive.

Militant secularists are determined to scrub the schools, and society in general, clean of the public expression of religion. Their opposition to the free exercise of religion, and their twisted interpretation of the plain meaning of the so-called establishment clause, puts them in the historical camp with tyrants. The Framers would not recognize what they have done to the First Amendment.

Just last week, a stellar high school student from Brawley Union High School in Brawley, California was told he could not exercise his constitutional right to speak about his faith at graduation; he did so anyway. This should never be allowed to happen again, anywhere. When students making obscene speeches in public are defended on First Amendment grounds, and students electing to speak about God are denied, it calls for a new law.

The North Carolina bill is the kind of legislation that is needed in every state. To that end, we are contacting the governors in the other 49 states asking them to adopt the North Carolina law as a model in their own state. We are also sending them a copy of the law that Governor McCrory signed.

**CENSORING VATICAN WEBSITE
CANNOT STAND**



Bill Donohue comments on the response by Jody Ian Goeler, Superintendent of Schools for Regional School District 14 in Connecticut, to accusations that the Vatican website has been blocked in district schools

because it promotes “hate speech”:

Yesterday afternoon, I asked Superintendent Goeler to “please identify examples of ‘hate speech’ found on the Vatican’s website.” He responded last night saying that he never “stated or implied anywhere that the Vatican website promotes or has examples of hate speech.” This resolves nothing. In a public letter released today, Goeler admits that access is provided to liberal websites, but not conservative ones. Nowhere does he address the issue of censoring the Vatican (Islamic sites are okay).

Goeler would have us believe that some kind of technological glitch is at work; he is asking the filtering service provider, Dell SonicWALL, for an explanation. But this condition is not a technological fluke—it is the work of a left-wing ideologue. Goeler’s big mistake was to state his tolerance for intolerance. “The district is trying to determine the reason for the inconsistency and *if bias is pervasive enough to justify switching to another content filtering provider.*” (My italics.)

I spent 20 years in education, 16 as a professor, and I cannot believe that any seasoned educator would make such a remarkable comment. Goeler would have us believe that before he can rule on this matter, he needs to know if the “bias is pervasive enough to justify switching.” Just how many websites of a “conservative”—or for that matter a “liberal”—nature have to be blocked to merit a change? And how many Catholic websites have to be censored before action is taken? The man is not suitable to work in education.

We are taking this issue to Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of the State Department of Education in Connecticut. This is a serious matter. Abridging the First Amendment can only be allowed when there is some competing interest of overriding importance. Stopping students from accessing the Vatican's website is not one of them.

Contact Commissioner Pryor: stefan.pryor@ct.gov

VATICAN WEBSITE CENSORED BY SCHOOL



Bill Donohue comments on news stories claiming that a Connecticut high school has censored the Vatican website:

Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, Connecticut has allegedly implemented a firewall blocking some websites it deems are "politically oriented." Among those that are blocked is the Vatican's website. Also blocked are the websites of the National Right to Life, National Rifle Association, Christianity.com, and many others. Websites that are not blocked, apparently because they are not "politically oriented," include Islam-guide.com, Planned Parenthood, and lgbtqnation.com.

According to a complaining student, Andrew Lampart, a senior, he was told by Jody Ian Goeler, the Superintendent of Schools, that it was necessary to block certain websites in order to

“prevent hate-speech from leeching into the school.” Lampart took his complaint to the Board of Education on Monday, and was told that his concerns merit a probe.

I just emailed Superintendent Goeler the following letter:

“It is alleged that you support censoring students at Nonnewaug High School from accessing the Vatican’s website on the grounds that it promotes ‘hate speech.’ Would you please identify examples of ‘hate speech’ found on the Vatican’s website?”

Perhaps others would like to do the same. This is not the last word on this issue. Trust me.

Contact Goeler: jgoeler@ctreg14.org

KUDOS TO ARCHBISHOP CORDILEONE



Bill Donohue comments on San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s response to those protesting his participation in the March for Marriage; it is being held tomorrow in Washington:

A motley group of public officials, community activists, religious leaders, and gay advocates are upset that Archbishop Cordileone supports marriage, properly understood. It is a striking sociological moment when elites stage a protest of an archbishop in the Roman Catholic Church simply because he

believes—as the whole world has believed for thousands of years—that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. It is not a good cultural sign that this commonsensical position is considered controversial, even hateful.

Those who are quick to brand support for traditional marriage hateful need to look in the mirror. As Archbishop Cordileone said in his excellent response to his critics, “for those who support the conjugal understanding of marriage, the attacks have not stopped at rhetoric. Simply for taking a stand for marriage as it has been understood in every human society for millennia, people have lost their jobs, lost their livelihoods, and have suffered other types of retribution, including physical violence.”

The archbishop, who is chairman of the bishops’ Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, offered to meet with those offended by his participation in the march. He asked “before you judge us, get to know us.” But will they?

Kudos to Archbishop Cordileone for standing on principle. Let’s also give a shout-out to his courageous spokeswoman, Christine A. Mugridge, for exclaiming, “We don’t hate-monger, we don’t pander to bigots.” We are not accustomed to such straight talk coming from those in her position.