

BIGOT RESIGNS FROM VIRGINIA GOV. POST

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the resignation of Gail Gordon Donegan:

We've learned that Gail Gordon Donegan, the anti-Catholic bigot named by Gov. Ralph Northam to the Virginia Council on Women, has resigned. This is welcome news.

Following Donegan's appointment, it was revealed that she has been spewing forth a torrent of vile, hate-filled [anti-Catholic twitter messages](#). This led to an outpouring of protest from Catholics, which has now resulted in her stepping down.

We commend Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond and Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington for speaking out forcefully on this matter and inspiring the Catholic faithful of Virginia to do so as well.

And we congratulate all those who receive our emailed news releases, and who responded to our call for messages to Gov. Northam's office demanding that Donegan be removed. Once again, you have made a difference.

NY STATE INTRUDES INTO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on proposed regulations that threaten Catholic schools:

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is considering a proposal that would greatly increase state oversight over private and religious schools—threatening the academic autonomy and religious freedom of Catholic schools.

The proposed regulations would delegate direct oversight of private and religious schools to the superintendents and school boards of the public school districts in which they are located. So, for example, on Long Island, the Mineola school district would be given authority to oversee Chaminade High School, and the Uniondale school district would oversee Kellenberg Memorial High School. District officials would be required to visit the Catholic schools periodically to make determinations regarding such things as curricula, testing and teacher competence.

“Test scores, report cards, teacher lesson plans, statistical data, etc., would all be subject to their review,” explains Chaminade principal Brother Joseph Bellizzi.

This is an unacceptable intrusion into the autonomy of our Catholic schools, and a clear violation of the separation of church and state. It is blatant overkill, ostensibly in response to complaints that some ultra-Orthodox yeshivas were failing to provide basic academic instruction. Now the state is using that limited problem to justify a blanket power grab that would put all private and religious schools under its control.

Besides being an attack on religious liberty, this is absurd from an academic standpoint. As Brother Joseph Bellizzi and Kellenberg principal Brother Kenneth Hoagland point out, their schools have always maintained a comprehensive educational program, “equal or superior to the program of studies dictated by the NYSED.” Indeed, given how some Catholic schools, particularly in low income communities, outperform their public school counterparts, perhaps it is the Catholic school administrators who should be overseeing the public schools.

That of course, would never happen—and shouldn't, given the religious mission of Catholic schools. But the double standard in New York State education policy is glaring. Constantly, we are told that the state can in no way—even indirectly—financially assist the families of Catholic school children, without violating the “separation of church and state.” Yet now the state presumes to intrude directly into the classrooms and administration of our Catholic schools, in order to fix a problem that does not exist.

It is urgent that our voices be heard in opposition to this attack on our Catholic schools. The deadline for comments is Sept. 1.

Contact the New York State Education Department:
seregcomments@nysed.gov

VA GOV. APPOINTS BIGOT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's appointment of an anti-Catholic bigot to a state council on women's issues:

Gail Gordon Donegan is a local political activist. She is also a vicious anti-Catholic bigot. Now, thanks to Gov. Ralph Northam, she is an appointee to the Virginia Council on Women. It is an appointment the governor must withdraw—at once!

It would be hard to outdo Donegan's vile tweets for pure, sustained hatred of Catholics, Catholic priests and Catholic teachings. A sampling:

- “Abortion is morally indefensible to Catholic priests bcuz it results in fewer children to rape.”

- Christmas is “the one time of year the Catholic Church is allowed to focus on a little boy.”
- “Go tell a Catholic they have dirt on their forehead.”
- “Saw a bumper sticker: ‘You can’t be both Catholic & Pro-Choice.’ Add: You can be a pedophile though!”

This is the kind of thing one would expect from a Klansman, not a responsible advocate for women’s issues. There is no place for this kind of hate speech in the halls of government.

A statement from a Northam spokeswoman that the governor “certainly does not condone this language” is woefully inadequate. Northam must rescind his appointment of Donegan. Anything less will make him complicit in her anti-Catholic bigotry.

Contact Gov. Northam’s press secretary Alena Yarmosky:
alena.yarmosky@governor.virginia.gov

U.N. COMMEMORATES RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a special U.N. event:

Today is a United Nations milestone: it is the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. A resolution marking this day was unanimously passed in May; it was introduced by Poland, no stranger to religious persecution.

On May 28, Poland’s foreign minister, Jacek Czaputowicz, addressed the General Assembly about this historic event. “The world has been experiencing an unprecedented rise of violence

against religious communities and people belonging to religious minorities.” He went on to say that “Any act of violence against people belonging to religious minorities cannot be accepted.”

When Aid to the Church in Need released its 2018 “Religious Freedom Report,” it noted that 61 percent of the world’s population live in nations where religious freedom is obstructed or completely denied. It estimated that 327 million Christians live in nations where they are persecuted for their faith.

In 2019, Open Doors released its report on religious persecution. It put the number of Christians being persecuted at over 245 million. In the period November 1, 2017-October 31, 2018, it found that 4,305 Christians were killed because of their faith.

Christians need to speak up more about the violence, church burnings, vandalism, and the like. In Europe, Christians in France are the most targeted. There were 875 attacks on Christian sites in 2018, and acts of theft and vandalism at Christian sites are peaking.

It was distressing to read what Georges Pontier, the head of the French Bishops Conference had to say about these attacks. “We do not want to develop a discourse of persecution. We do not wish to complain.” The bishop is mistaken. The discourse of persecution has already begun, so he either participates in it or not. History shows that there is no virtue in confronting persecution with silence; it only ensures more of it.

Acting more responsibly is President Trump. On July 17, he met with 27 victims of religious persecution from around the world, pledging his support for religious freedom. He was commended by Freedom House for doing so.

No one believes that religious persecution will end any time

soon, but it is important for the United Nations to set aside a day to draw attention to this very serious problem. We hope it will now put some teeth into this resolution.

CARDINAL PELL VICTIMIZED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the conviction of Cardinal George Pell:

Cardinal George Pell was convicted today by the State Supreme Court of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia of sexually abusing two minors. The appeals court judges split 2-1 against him. He is the most prominent Catholic cleric ever to be convicted of such a crime. He is also the most unfairly treated Catholic cleric in recent history.

In 2017, Pell was accused of sexually abusing minors. In September 2018, the trial ended in a hung jury; no determination could be reached. In December he was found guilty in a second trial. Now he has lost on appeal. It is not certain whether he will now appeal to the High Court of Australia, the nation's highest court.

The case against Pell depended largely on the testimony of one of two choirboys: the accuser claims that both he and his friend were abused by the cardinal after Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1996. The police investigated the charge and found nothing to support it.

One of the boys later died of a drug overdose. However, before he died he told his mother—on two occasions—that he was never abused by Pell. Why wasn't this enough to exculpate Pell? Isn't that alone cause for reasonable doubt? In his dissent, Justice Mark Weinberg noted that "the complainant was inclined

to embellish aspects of his account.” Apparently, his observation got by the other two judges.

There are many other aspects to Cardinal Pell’s ordeal that demonstrate how unjustly he has been treated for many years [click [here](#) for my analysis], making today’s ruling incomprehensible. We can only hope and pray that the Vatican does not pile on by defrocking him. That would only add to the litany of injustices he has had to endure.

Make no mistake about it—Cardinal Pell is no Theodore McCarrick. In fact, he is a decent man who has been repeatedly victimized by the courts. The environment in Victoria for Catholics has long been poisoned. Today’s ruling is one more example of it.

SLOGANEERING HELPS NO ONE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on two recent examples of blatant hypocrisy by activists and lawmakers:

Helping the vulnerable is a noble goal, but when those who champion its cause resort to sloganeering, it discredits their efforts. Here are two recent examples.

On August 19, Religion News Service published a glowing interview with the 89-year old founder of Bread for the World, Art Simon. A former Lutheran pastor, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity in combating poverty. The problem is that the organization that he founded has never given a dime to the poor, or provided services for them.

Bread for the World is a lobbying organization that pressures the Congress to provide more welfare programs for the poor.

Its goal is to educate the public, especially lawmakers, about hunger in the United States and abroad. It also analyzes public policies designed to end poverty. What it does not do is to touch the lives of the poor.

There is a better way to tackle poverty than to help more middle-class bureaucrats police the poor in Washington. That is the Mother Teresa way. She was not opposed to government programs instituted to help the poor, but she saw their role as secondary. She knew that the poor needed food, clothing and shelter, as well as medicinal care. But that was not enough: They needed love.

When Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher boasted to Mother Teresa that Britain had a fine welfare system, the saintly nun replied, "But do you have love?" For Mother Teresa, helping the poor is ideally a personal exchange, an ongoing relationship between two parties; it is not a "program."

Vijay Prashad was born and raised in Calcutta. He became a Communist and an ardent defender of government programs. But he praised Mother Teresa for her work with lepers and children. She and her fellow nuns "certainly brought relief for many people, not in medical terms," he said, "but with love and affection." This is particularly important when dealing with the sick and dying.

On August 19, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill that committed the state to respect "the human rights and dignity" of every person, including respect for "the sanctity of every human life."

This is pure nonsense. The bill has nothing to do with respecting "the sanctity of every human life." Just ask those who throw out the trash in abortion clinics. The wording of the bill deals exclusively with putting more restrictions on the police when dealing with life and death situations. The "sanctity" of life that Newsom wants to protect refers to

thugs out to kill the cops.

Newsom likes abortion so much that on May 31 he invited women from across the country—make that the world since he doesn't believe in borders—to come to California to get their abortions.

Sloganeering about the poor is a cheap way to combat poverty. Sloganeering about the sanctity of human life, while actively working against it, is more than hypocritical—it is despicable.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR FED CONTRACTORS MAY SPIKE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on enhanced religious liberty protections for federal contractors:

The Trump administration has released a proposal that would strengthen the religious rights of federal contractors. Current law exempts religious non-profit organizations from federal laws on discrimination.

The proposed rule would expand the religious exemption to any company where the owners claim that their sincerely held religious beliefs would be compromised if they had to comply with certain federal regulations. The rule would also extend to companies the same right currently afforded non-profit religious entities in making hiring and firing decisions.

There is a sound religious liberty principle involved in the proposal. The reason why religious non-profits are allowed these exemptions is to ensure that employees practice fidelity

to the tenets of the organization's religion. If they did not, their *raison d'être* would implode. What is the purpose of having a religious non-profit if its mission can be subverted by employees who are hostile to it?

In the private sector, the Trump administration is saying that the religious convictions of the owner should not be forfeited because his organization is a for-profit entity. The Department of Labor quite properly cited the U.S. Supreme Court Hobby Lobby ruling which allowed a for-profit company not to provide for contraceptives in its healthcare plan; the religious convictions of the owner were sustained.

Beginning today, the public has a month to comment on the proposal. We will do so.

This is just one more instance where the Trump administration has moved forward extending religious liberty to all Americans.

WISCONSIN LAWMAKER LIES ABOUT CATHOLIC LEAGUE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Wisconsin state legislator Chris Taylor's dishonesty:

Having co-authored a bill that would require Catholic priests to violate the seal of the confessional, Rep. Chris Taylor distorts the Catholic League's opposition to this bill as a stand against protecting abused children. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We have always supported laws that require *all* professionals

who work with minors—be they clergy, teachers, scout leaders, health care workers, or *abortion providers like Planned Parenthood*—to report instances of child sexual abuse. Wisconsin's current law, which we support, already includes clergy as mandatory reporters. What we oppose is this bill's direct attack on a sacrament of the Church—an attack that will do nothing to further the protection of minors.

We challenge Rep. Taylor to cite even one case of sexual abuse of a minor that would have been reported but for the seal of the confessional. No priest will subject himself to excommunication by violating this most sacred of vows.

Taylor is also dishonest in claiming that this bill does not single out the Catholic Church. As the local *Journal Times* newspaper points out, the Catholic Church *is* singled out, in a full paragraph of last week's news release announcing the new bill.

Moreover, if the sponsors do not mean to target the Catholic sacrament of Confession, where is the provision overriding attorney-client privilege? Or that between psychologists and psychiatrists and their patients? Surely these professionals also at times learn of sexual abuse of minors during confidential sessions. Why are they not also required to break their confidentiality with clients or patients?

In fact, if anyone is guilty of protecting those who sexually abuse minors, it is Rep. Chris Taylor, through her ongoing affiliation with Planned Parenthood.

Last year, 56 members of Congress wrote to the Department of Health and Human Services calling for a federal investigation into what one congressman termed Planned Parenthood's "unconscionable, inhumane cover-up of child sexual abuse." The letter included testimony from former Planned Parenthood workers about girls as young as 12 or 13 being brought to Planned Parenthood for abortions, then returned to the family

members, sex traffickers or other adults who had sexually abused and impregnated them.

“More than once I was told , ‘No, that is not reportable. You don’t need to call it in,’” one former Planned Parenthood clinic manager stated. The nation’s leading abortion provider “didn’t want to have the trouble—the angry parent, the angry boyfriend, whatever it was,” she said.

Planned Parenthood has gone so far as to *oppose* laws that would require its counselors to report cases of statutory rape. Instead, through their silence, they act as accomplices with rapists.

What has Rep. Taylor done to address this scandal? Nothing. And for good reason. Prior to her election to the state legislature, Taylor was public policy director for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin. And according to her biography, she remains affiliated with the abortion giant, serving as a member of the Planned Parenthood Federation and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin.

As a Planned Parenthood activist, if Taylor were serious about protecting minors from sexual abuse, she would demand that her own organization end its cover-up of such abuse.

Instead, by her silence she is complicit in that cover-up—meaning, apparently, that her enthusiasm for abortion outweighs her desire to protect children from sexual abuse.

Either that, or she is simply driven by an animus against the Catholic Church.

Contact Rep. Chris Taylor: Rep.Taylor@legis.wisconsin.gov

PA GRAND JURY REPORT ONE YEAR LATER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Pennsylvania grand jury report on the Catholic Church that was released a year ago:

On August 14, 2018 Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro released a grand jury report on six of the eight Catholic dioceses in the state. News reports said he found evidence of 301 priests who abused more than 1,000 children over a period of 70 years.

As I said at the time, and I will say so again, those reports were thrice false: a) not all the alleged offenders were priests b) most of the alleged victims were not children (they were adolescents) and c) the report was not evidentiary—it was investigative—meaning that the accused priests were not given an opportunity to rebut the charges.

What has happened since the report was released? Of the 301 persons named, two wound up facing criminal charges and were sent to prison. Most of the offenders either had already been thrown out of the priesthood or were dead. Shapiro knew this going into his probe, yet he spent a colossal amount of the taxpayers' money on this gambit, simply to make a name for himself. In doing so he followed in the footsteps of others.

From the beginning, the investigations of the Catholic Church were classic cases of religious profiling. To be exact, never once did Shapiro, or any of his predecessors, conduct an investigation into any other institution, religious or secular. Nor has Shapiro done so in the past year. It is only the Catholic Church these top cops like to pursue.

The first investigation into the sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church that was conducted by a Pennsylvania executive

occurred in 2001. It was also the start of the religious profiling probes. Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham was given a specific charge "to investigate the sexual abuse of minors by individuals associated with religious organizations and denominations." She never did. She chose only the Catholic Church: Jews, Muslims, and Protestants were all given a pass. And, of course, the public schools were never of any interest to her.

In 2005, Abraham gave up: not a single priest was prosecuted. That's because she could not prosecute old cases, something she knew from the get-go. In other words, she ripped off the taxpayers, making them pay for her wild goose chase.

In 2011, Abraham's successor, Seth Williams, tried to outdo her. He wanted to bring down the archbishop of Philadelphia, but that didn't work out too well for him. Instead, he brought down himself. In 2017, he was sentenced to five years in prison on multiple counts of bribery, extortion and fraud. He even robbed money set aside to pay for his own mother's nursing home care, using it to fund his lavish lifestyle. He was taken out of court in handcuffs.

Next up was the beginning of the state efforts to get the Catholic Church. In 2014, a grand jury was seated by Attorney General Kathleen Kane. She wanted to bring down the Catholic hierarchy as well. But like Williams, that didn't work out too well for her. Instead, she brought down herself. In 2016, she was sentenced to 10-23 months in prison for committing multiple felonies: she leaked sealed, confidential grand jury documents to the media and then lied under oath. She was taken out of court in handcuffs.

Kane had no legitimate reason to start her probe. Ironically, it all began when a bishop contacted the local authorities about offenses that came to his attention committed by someone under his watch. Had he said nothing, there would have been no grand jury investigation by either Kane or Shapiro. Instead of

commending the bishop, Kane took advantage of his honesty to go after the Catholic Church throughout the state.

In November 2011, Bishop Mark Bartchak, who headed the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, learned of offenses committed by Brother Stephen Baker in the 1990s at Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown. He immediately notified the authorities. The police never contacted Cambria County District Attorney Kathleen Callihan; once she learned of this case, she decided not to start a grand jury probe. Instead, she asked for a state investigation, handing the matter over to Attorney General Kane.

Now imagine for a moment if a public school superintendent in central Pennsylvania were to turn in a teacher believed to have sexually abused a student. Imagine further that the local district attorney decides to contact the state's attorney general—instead of conducting his own probe—and this leads to an investigation of every school district in the state. And that, in turn, triggers state investigations of the public schools throughout the nation.

This would never happen, not in a million years. To this day, the public school industry is protected in Pennsylvania, even though the Associated Press reported five years ago that the Keystone State ranked No. 2 in teacher sex crimes in the nation. It is also protected in every other state, shielded by the teachers' unions and the politicians they fund.

The politics of sexual abuse is almost as disgusting as sexual abuse. We've been played. This is not about justice—it's about selectively choosing one class of offenders to prosecute. It's called religious profiling. It ought to be as invidious as racial profiling, but obviously it is not.

WISCONSIN BILL ASSAULTS CONFESSIOANAL SEAL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a bill about to be introduced in the Wisconsin legislature:

A bill to bust the seal of the confessional will soon be introduced by three Democratic lawmakers from Wisconsin: Sen. Lena Taylor, Rep. Chris Taylor and Rep. Melissa Sargent. The clergy in Wisconsin are already mandated reporters of sexual abuse; this bill would remove the exemption afforded the confessional.

The sponsors of the bill have provided no evidence that this bill would remedy anything. Indeed, they cannot cite one case of sexual abuse that would have been reported to the authorities had the religious exemption for the confessional not existed.

This bill is a monumental flop. Not only does it not solve anything, it will not convince a single priest to subject himself to excommunication for violating his vows. Moreover, a lawsuit will immediately be filed challenging this violation of the First Amendment by state officials.

The government has no business policing the sacraments of the Catholic Church. This is nothing but grandstanding by politicians pretending to be champions of the victims of sexual abuse.

Why don't these brave lawmakers go after the lawyer-client privilege? Don't attorneys learn of instances of the sexual abuse of minors? Why not target psychologists and psychiatrists as well? They hear about cases of sexual abuse, yet they are forbidden to violate their professional commitment to their patients.

Why are Catholic priests being singled out? This is religious profiling. Indeed, the bill is manifestly anti-Catholic.

We are contacting every member of the Wisconsin legislature today about this bill. The state needs to back off and keep its hands out of the internal affairs of the Catholic Church or any other religion. We see this as a national issue, one that has grave implications for religious liberty throughout the country.

It is important for those who oppose this bill to contact Sen. Scott L. Fitzgerald, the Majority Leader, who is a Republican, urging him to lead the opposition to this bill.

Contact: Sen.Fitzgerald@legis.wisconsin.gov