

WAR ON CATHOLIC HOSPITALS; COURT BATTLES LOOM

On May 10, the Biden administration announced that it would force doctors who can perform sex transition surgery to do so, regardless of their religious objections. This is a declaration of war by the Department of Health and Human Services on Catholic doctors and hospitals. It will also be contested in the federal courts.

Title IX of civil rights law bars discrimination based on sex, but says nothing about transgender persons. Yet both the Obama and Biden administrations insist that this provision should cover transgender persons; the Trump administration held to the original understanding.

In a May 10 news story by the Associated Press (AP) on this subject, it said that the Obama administration “relied on a broad understanding of sex shaped by a person’s inner sense of being male, female, neither or a combination.”

Paradoxically, this AP interpretation is both accurate and inaccurate at the same time.

It accurately conveys what both the Obama and Biden administrations believe: being male or female is a subjective judgment, one that allows a man or a woman to deny that they are a man or a woman, or any sex at all, for that matter. Which means they could be an acorn. It is inaccurate because it is a fiction: one’s “inner sense” of what sex one belongs to may be inaccurate. What matters is reality, not tales from “The Twilight Zone.”

This assault on religious liberty began in 2015 when the Obama administration issued a mandate requiring doctors and hospitals to provide for transgender surgeries; it was then tied up in the courts. They made no exemption for those who

had religious objections. Neither does the Biden administration. What this means is that Catholic physicians who can perform sex reassignment surgery can be forced to do so; Catholic hospitals are also denied a religious exemption.

Pope Francis has observed that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.” The bishops’ conference agrees, saying it opposes religious organizations “to cover ‘transition’ procedures in their employee health insurance plans...”

It must be noted that Catholic hospitals do not deny routine health care to transgender persons. There is a difference between denying transgender persons treatment for Covid and forcing a Catholic doctor to make anatomical changes on the sexually confused.

The Biden administration’s war on Catholic hospitals is one of many policies it has promoted that endanger religious liberty. That they are being shoved down our throats by a man who professes to be a “devout Catholic” is all the more nauseating.

BAD OMENS IN CALIFORNIA

The California State Senate is moving at full speed to pass the Equitable and Inclusive UC Healthcare Act. This legislation seeks to break existing partnerships between the University of California and hospitals, particularly Catholic ones, that refuse to provide elective abortions, sex reassignment surgeries and sterilizations.

If the Equitable and Inclusive UC Healthcare Act were to become law, UCLA would have to break its contract with Dignity

Health that operates several specialty clinics.

UC Davis would also have to terminate its joint run cancer treatment center with Mercy Medical Center in Merced, while St. Mary's Medical Center could no longer administer San Francisco's only inpatient adolescent psychiatry program with UC San Francisco.

Ultimately, all of these would leave patients without access to life-saving treatments. "It's only going to take away [health care] from the poor and vulnerable," said Lori Dangberg, vice-president of the Alliance of Catholic Health Care.

To further this point, Dr. Carrie Byington, executive vice-president of UC Health, said that "low-income and rural communities and people of color" would bear the brunt of the reduced access to care that could be "life threatening [in some instances] and exacerbate health disparities."

It is a sad commentary on our society when those who harbor an animus against Catholicism do not care who gets hurt, including the poor. These are bad omens for Californians and beyond.

"HATE AMERICA" CAMPAIGN IS IN HIGH GEAR

The United States is beset with numerous problems, though none as serious as teaching students and workers why they should hate America. It is an intellectually dishonest game, riddled with distortions and out-and-out lies about American history, as well as tortured interpretations of current events.

It is disturbing to note that the left-wing agenda is no longer confined to places like higher education and the media. No, it has been mainstreamed into the corporate world, collegiate and professional sports, and beyond. Some politicians have also embraced the "Hate America" campaign.

There are three identifiable stages to this campaign.

The baby boomers, who were born after World War II, came of age in the Sixties at a time of unprecedented affluence and domestic strife. The civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, and the sexual revolution wrought chaos and confusion. The Sixties and Seventies were marked by a movement to hate America, though the agenda of the left was inchoate as compared to the stages that followed.

Stage one flowered in academia and in select urban neighborhoods. College students were taught how racist and sexist our heritage is, and how imperialistic our foreign policy is. Amerikkka, as it was called, was the land of oppression. It did not matter that those who promoted this lie were Marxists, the masters of oppression. Parts of many urban areas, particularly on the east and west coasts, were overtaken by drug-addicted hippies who preached love while throwing Molotov cocktails at the police.

Stage two was born in the Eighties. Just as the college campuses gave rise to the first installment of hatred, they were the site of the second wave. Its principal vehicle was multiculturalism. This pedagogical tool was never about teaching students to appreciate diverse cultures; rather, it was used as an ideological weapon to trash Western civilization and its Judeo-Christian heritage.

Pope Benedict XVI wasn't fooled. Multiculturalism, he observed, has led to "a peculiar Western self-hatred that is nothing short of pathological." The distinguished historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., was more specific. "There is surely

no reason for Western civilization to have guilt trips laid on it by champions of cultures based on despotism, superstition, tribalism, and fanaticism.”

Multiculturalism is also about fomenting division, segregating various demographic groups, emphasizing how little we have in common.

We see expressions of it today. The class of 2021 at Columbia University allowed for separate “Multicultural Graduation Celebrations.” The menu included events for Native, Asian, “Latinx” (it is not chic to have masculine and feminine identifiers, as in Latinos and Latinas, respectively), African Americans, Lavender (homosexuals and transgender persons) and FLI (first-generation, low-income students). This obviously presented a dilemma for rich gay first-generation persons of mixed ancestry, but such is life at the Ivies these days.

The third stage of the “Hate America” campaign, which began in the 1990s and is now in full bloom, is grounded in critical race theory, an ideology that was crafted by racists to combat racism. It is a curious blend of Marxism (the capitalists are the oppressive class) and racism (white people are inherently racist). Its popularity is widespread, extending from the halls of government to Wall Street. The Biden administration is currently weighing strategies to implement critical race theory in the schools, making certain that no one will escape participation in the “Hate America” campaign.

Where do you rank on the scale of “power and privilege?” That is what first-grade students in California are being asked. In Missouri, middle-school teachers are being asked to rate themselves on an “oppression” index. Predictably, the bad guys are white, heterosexual, English-speaking, Christian males. They oppress people. Take note of that, Oprah.

The campuses are alive with critical race theory. Michigan State University held a conference in May instructing white

students to admit their “white privilege,” even if reared in a foster home. At Smith College, all employees were forced to undergo “antibias” training after a black student claimed she was racially profiled. It was later learned that she lied. Georgetown fired a tenured professor for simply noting that her black law students were not doing well in her classes.

There is little pushback in the corporations, or on the college campuses, against the “Hate America” campaign, but there are signs that parents of elementary school students have had enough. Many are now pulling their kids from pricey private schools. Even some faculty members are objecting. One such teacher publicly scolded the headmaster of his New York City school for “demonizing white people for being born.”

Not until more Americans object to these pernicious “Hate America” campaigns in the workplace, schools and government will we liberate ourselves from this demonic attack on our heritage and our sensibilities. The barbarians are not at the gate—they’ve captured our culture and our institutions.

BIDEN ADMIN CLAIMS AMERICA IS RACIST

Never before in American history has there been as many members of a presidential administration who have openly declared the United States to be a racist nation. Here is a sample from the Biden administration.

President Joe Biden: “Systemic racism that is a stain our nation’s soul; the knee on the neck of justice for Black Americans; the profound fear and trauma, the pain, the exhaustion that Black and brown Americans experience every

single day... this takes acknowledging and confronting, head on, systemic racism and the racial disparities that exist in policing and in our criminal justice system more broadly.”

Vice President Kamala Harris: “America has a long history of systemic racism. Black Americans – and Black men, in particular – have been treated, throughout the course of our history, as less than human.”

Sec. Antony Blinken, Department of State: “‘We believe that it is important for the United States to change its own image and to stop advancing its own democracy in the rest of the world,’ he said. ‘Many people within the United States actually have little confidence in the democracy of the United States.’”

Sec. Janet Yellen, Department of the Treasury: “The country is also facing a climate crisis, a crisis of systemic racism, and an economic crisis that has been building for fifty years.... I believe economic policy can be a potent tool to improve society. We can – and should – use it to address inequality, racism, and climate change.”

Sec. Lloyd Austin, Department of Defense: “‘If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault, to rid our ranks of racists and extremists, and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity,’ Austin, 67, said at his confirmation hearing.” “‘The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can’t do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks,’ Austin told the Senate Armed Services Committee.”

AG Merrick Garland, Department of Justice: “‘I think it is plain to me that there is discrimination and widespread disparate treatment of communities of color and other ethnic minorities in this country,’ Judge Garland says when asked to define systemic racism.”

Sec. Deb Haaland, Department of the Interior: “We must

acknowledge the pain that African American communities across the nation and around the world are feeling during these turbulent times and commit ourselves to real progress.”

“Serious inequities exist in this country. We cannot continue with business as normal. We must tackle these issues and build a country where race doesn’t determine access to opportunity, justice, and accountability.”

Sec. Tom Vilsack, Department of Agriculture: “‘We’ll have an equity commission, which will begin the process of investigating all of the programs at USDA to make sure that we identify and root out any systemic racism that may exist in those programs,’ said Vilsack. ‘Now, the reality is that we’ve not only had discrimination in the past but we’ve had the cumulative effect of that discrimination, which needs to be addressed.’”

Sec. Gina Raimondo, Department of Commerce: “Our work to dismantle systemic racism in Rhode Island did not start today and it will not end today, but we can rise together and make meaningful progress toward racial equity now.”

“And the fact of the matter is, we know that lack of investment, particularly in public transportation, transit, water, housing, has hurt low-income folks and people of color the most. And it’s time to finally rectify that systemic inequality and build back better and more equally.”

Sec. Marty Walsh, Department of Labor: “You have to be very intentional about dealing with systemic racism. Systemic racism just didn’t come in since May of last year. Systemic racism has been here forever, if you want to be honest about it. But we have a unique opportunity when we talk about recovering from covid-19 to be able to really focus on the issue of systemic racism, also inequality, gender inequality and all kinds of other types of inequality.”

“White people shouldn’t be afraid of the word white privilege.

It can be a complicated conversation to have, but we can't run away from it."

Sec. Xavier Becerra, Department of Health and Human Services: "We must meet the challenge to further justice and equity. At HHS, I will do everything I can to tackle racism as a serious public health threat that affects our mental and physical well-being." "We at the Department of Health and Human Services stand with marginalized communities to provide support and do our part to ensure that health and well-being are treated as a right and our systems are actively furthering justice."

Sec. Marcia Fudge, Department of Housing and Urban Development: "'Black people have always been aware of systemic and institutional racism. COVID-19 just proved to the rest of the country that it exists."

Sec. Pete Buttigieg, Department of Transportation: "'Black and brown neighborhoods have been disproportionately divided by highway projects or left isolated by the lack of adequate transit and transportation resources,' Mr. Buttigieg tweeted in December. In an interview earlier this month, he reiterated that 'there is racism physically built into some of our highways' and said the infrastructure program includes money 'specifically committed to reconnect some of the communities that were divided by these dollars.'"

Sec. Jennifer Granholm, Department of Energy: "Her voice wavered as she compared her own son to Martin. 'I have a wonderful teenage son too and he wears hoodies and he carries his cellphone and he likes skittles and if this were my son, my God,' she continued. 'But let's face it. This is not something that would happen to my son or many other sons. This happened because Trayvon was black.'"

Sec. Miguel Cardona, Department of Education: "Our country faces multiple crises – including a health pandemic & a

pandemic of hate & racism that has been prevalent for centuries.”

Sec. Denis McDonough, Department of Veteran Affairs:

“‘Confronting this question of racial inequity will be a fundamental part of my tenure here, not least because the president is demanding it,’

Sec. Alejandro Mayorkas, Department of Homeland Security:

“DHS will continue to lawfully monitor threats posed by foreign terrorist organizations. But we also know that the threat posed by domestic violent extremism will remain persistent. We have witnessed an increase in domestic attacks, particularly by white-supremacist, anti-government and anti-authority extremists. The majority of these attacks have targeted communities of color and other minority groups.”

Shalanda Young, Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget:

“America is confronting four compounding crises of unprecedented scope,” including “a national reckoning on racial inequity centuries in the making.”

Office of Management and Budget:

“‘The moment has come for the nation to deal with systemic racism and to ensure the promise of America is finally and fully open to all – not just some – Americans.’”

Susan Rice Domestic Policy Council chief:

“I’d say better late than never. You know, to serve an administration which has been racist to its core for the last three and a half years, from comparing the peaceful protesters at Charlottesville to white supremacists, calling white supremacists very fine people, all the way through to the recent weeks where the administration has disparaged the Black Lives Matter movement, disparaged the peaceful protesters, and basically made plain that they prefer to stand by a Confederate legacy than a modern America, it’s been an administration whose record on race is just disgraceful,” Rice said

“For too many American families, systemic racism and inequality in our economy, laws and institutions, still put the American Dream far out of reach,” she said.

Michael S. Regan Administrator of the Environmental Protection

Agency: “We must strengthen our state laws and regulations to be more inclusive of communities of color and tribal concerns before a location is chosen and well before a permit application is submitted. This process highlights the allegations of systemic racism that zoning and business-friendly regulations perpetuate against communities of color.”

Linda Thomas-Greenfield United States Ambassador to the United

Nations: “I have seen for myself how the original sin of slavery weaved white supremacy into our founding documents and principles.”

“Racism is the problem of the racist. And it is the problem of the society that produces the racist. And in today’s world, that is every society.”

Isabel Guzman Administrator of the Small Business

Administration: “Systemic racism is a persistent roadblock for women and minority small business owners. This was true before the pandemic, and unfortunately, it’s even more true now.”

Ron Klain White House Chief of Staff: “We face four overlapping and compounding crises, including “a racial equity crisis.” “Much more will need to be done to... combat systemic racism and inequality.”

Cecilia Rouse Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors:

“Racism in the justice system and discrimination in the labor market and health care system are not new, but the death of George Floyd and others at the hands of police, and the disparate impacts of Covid-19 and the economic crisis on black and brown communities have laid bare how racism permeates every facet of American life.”

BIDEN, THE BISHOPS AND COMMUNION

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will meet June 16 for a few days to discuss many issues, among them being what to do about President Biden's suitability to receive Communion.

It appears that most bishops consider several of the president's policies to be at odds with some Catholic teachings. The question is what to do about it. This would not matter much if the president were not a Catholic. What makes matters worse is that he and those in his administration boast of his Catholic status.

Some Catholics, as well as those who are not Catholic, are confused. The Catholic Church teaches that we must respect the right to life of the unborn. It also insists that we cannot accept the notion that men can "transition" to women, and vice versa. These are two fundamental biological realities, both of which are under assault. Worse, Biden is one of those leading the charge.

This, of course, raises the question of Biden's Catholicity. Is he a Catholic in good standing when he leads efforts to undercut Catholic teachings on such grave matters? If he is, what would it take for him to be sanctioned? If he is not, what should be done about it?

In May, the Vatican issued directives to the bishops instructing them to be careful about adopting stringent policies. Indeed, it laid down conditions that tilt favorably to Catholic politicians like Biden who persist in rejecting Church teachings on serious matters. The bishops are faced

with some tough decisions.

WHY DID BIDEN NIX GOD IN PRAYER ADDRESS?

President Biden raised more than eyebrows when he omitted any mention of God in his National Day of Prayer proclamation. What he did was unprecedented: No previous president has failed to mention God since the day it was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of Congress and signed into law by President Harry Truman.

When asked about Biden's omission, Rev. Franklin Graham was generous in his remarks. "It was probably a staff person that wrote it and maybe not even ran it by him—because I don't think Joe Biden would have approved that one." Maybe.

Even if Graham is right, that doesn't settle the issue. Why would a speechwriter nix God from a presidential speech about prayer?

It is no secret that the Democratic Party is home to secularists. Those who have no religious affiliation, as well as agnostics and atheists, have laid anchor in the Party, many of whom are openly hostile to religion and people of faith. It is not a leap to conclude that this mentality colored Biden's prepared remarks.

Last summer, Secular Democrats of America was welcomed at the Democratic National Convention. They were given three panels to voice their concerns, and they did not hold back in lambasting Christian conservatives. At another session, held on August 18, 2020, hundreds of secular Democrats tuned in to

an event hosted by this group. It featured congressmen, state lawmakers and activists: they focused on what they said were constitutional threats made by some Christians.

Last fall, Humanists for Biden was established, an offshoot of Secular Democrats of America. It was headed by a professor who calls himself a chaplain, even though he is an atheist and the term chaplain refers to a clergyman.

In December, Secular Democrats of America submitted a 28-page report to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris outlining their animus against religious liberty. They essentially want to secularize religious institutions, gutting most religious exemptions. Their demonization of white Christians was perhaps the most odious aspect of the report.

Militant secularists have long hated the National Day of Prayer. In 2003, the American Humanist Association established a National Day of Reason; even the secular-minded media ignore it. Cribbing off the National Day of Prayer, which is celebrated on the first Thursday in May, the atheists chose the same day to mark their event. Looks like it didn't accomplish too much this year—there were no events. “There is no specific location where this holiday is celebrated,” it said.

In 2010, Freedom From Religion Foundation, a Christian-bashing atheist organization, argued in court that the National Day of Prayer was unconstitutional. It won in a district court but lost on appeal. A federal appeals court ruled that the organization lacked standing, adding that its “feeling of alienation” was not sufficient grounds to file suit. “Hurt feelings differ from legal injury,” the court said.

The National Day of Prayer Task Force organizes this annual event; it is privately funded. Those who are averse to prayer are free to ignore it. But those who choose to participate are expected to pay tribute to God, which is why what President

Biden did was inexplicable at best and objectionable at worst.

To the extent that Biden's remarks reflect the sentiments of those who are running the White House, this does not speak well for him or his administration. More important, it doesn't bode well for the country.

ETHICS OF FETAL RESEARCH UNDER BIDEN

Too many Americans find it hard to get worked up about fetal research. Perhaps if they knew more about the moral implications of such practices, they would be more concerned. Once we treat the least among us as "material," bad things happen. Consider the following.

In 2019, a jury awarded \$58 million in damages to ten plaintiffs after finding that the Biological Resource Center in Phoenix had deceived families into donating the body of a deceased family member. The families thought the body would be used for medical research. Instead, the bodies were dismembered and sold for profit.

FBI agents raided the facility in 2014 and found chopped up bodies in buckets, including feet, shoulders, legs, and spines. Freezers were packed with penises. They even found a torso with a different head sewn on, reminiscent of "Frankenstein." The owner of the human chop shop, Stephen Gore, was convicted of deceiving the families who donated the bodies; he also broke the law by deceiving the buyers who were sold body parts with infectious diseases.

How could something like this happen? It's actually not hard

to understand. When we objectify human beings, treating them as inanimate objects, such practices logically follow.

The Catholic Church has a long and proud record of opposing attempts to dehumanize men, women, and children, ranging from denouncing pagan practices such as infanticide to Nazi eugenics. Their latest salvo is a shot at the Biden administration for lifting limits on human fetal research that were placed by the Trump administration.

Archbishop Joseph Naumann, chairman of the bishops' conference on Pro-Life Activities, released a statement on April 21 that was superb. "The bodies of children killed by abortion deserve the same respect as that of any other person. Our government has no right to treat innocent abortion victims as a commodity that can be scavenged for body parts to be used for research. It is unethical to promote and subsidize research that can lead to legitimizing the violence of abortion."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki was asked about this statement on April 27. She said the White House "respectfully disagrees," explaining that "it's important to invest in science and look for opportunities to cure diseases."

As expected, she never acknowledged the humanity of the unborn child. If she were to do so, the administration that she serves would have to rescind many executive orders and other policy prescriptions that service the pro-abortion industry. They would never do that—they have too much invested in the culture of death.

It's easy to ignore the humanity of the unborn if we call fetal tissue "material." That was the choice of words used by Planned Parenthood in the 70s. In the 80s, Newsweek described the dismembered body of an unborn baby extracted in a D&E abortion as "fetal material being pulled from a woman's vagina." In the same decade, Rachel Conrad Wahlberg, an abortion-rights advocate, contended that the unborn do not

have an independent existence. Referring to the pregnant woman, she said, "It is hers. It is her *possession* (italic in the original)."

The same mindset marked the *Dred Scott* decision that legalized slavery. In the 1857 Supreme Court decision, the court affirmed public opinion by noting that black people were "articles of property and merchandise." Nearly 400 blacks were used as guinea pigs in the infamous Tuskegee experiment that began in 1932. For 40 years, rural sharecroppers who took part in the experiment never knew they had syphilis, nor were treated for it. They were not seen as human beings with rights equal to that of others.

After World War I, prisoners in San Quentin received transplanted sex organs from rams, goats, and boars. Tuberculosis treatments were tested on other prisoners. Inmates of Stateville Correctional Center in Illinois were exposed to malaria in the hope that a cure could be found. The drug companies had a field day experimenting on the incarcerated, and did so without controversy right up until the 1970s.

Not only were prisoners seen as subhuman, so were mentally retarded children. From the mid-1950s to 1970, those housed at Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, New York were infected with hepatitis so that doctors could track the spread of the viral infection. More than 700 children were infected to see how they responded to a drug treatment.

After what Jews went through at the hands of Nazi physician Josef Mengele—he performed painful and often deadly experiments on twins—it led to the establishment of the Nuremberg Code, a guideline for conducting research on humans. The first stricture insists that the subject must provide consent before research can begin.

A child in his mother's womb can never give consent.

Archbishop Naumann got it right when he said “it is deeply offensive to millions of Americans for our tax dollars to be used for research that collaborates with an industry built on the taking of innocent lives.” Worse, this morally indefensible decision was rendered by our “devout Catholic” president.

BIDEN’S BORDER PROBLEM IS EXPLODING

President Biden is getting high marks for his overall performance, but if there is one issue that is dogging him, it is the crisis at the border. He even refuses to call it a crisis. Indeed, neither he nor his border-in-chief vice president has shown any interest in visiting the border.

Two new surveys spell disaster for the president on this subject. A Pew Research Center poll found that almost 7 in 10 Americans say Biden is doing a bad job dealing with the increasing number of migrants who are crashing our border. Most want more staffing and resources made available to handle the throngs of people, often unaccompanied children, who are seeking asylum. The majority also favor improving the safety and sanitary conditions facing these people.

The public knows that the situation is worse now than before. In fact, over the past year there has been a 20% increase in the share of Americans who say illegal immigration is a “very big” national problem.

A poll by tippinsights (TIPP), commissioned by the National Sheriffs’ Association, found that 55% of Americans think the border crisis is making matters worse for migrant women, many

of whom are forced into indentured servitude and prostitution. Almost 6 in 10 say that the increase in migrants who are suffering (e.g., drowning) is preventable. Half believe the southern border crisis is contributing to the spread of Covid.

Since Biden took office, he has issued almost 100 executive orders on immigration, approximately half of which reversed initiatives taken by the Trump administration. According to Rep. Scott Franklin, "What's happening to our border is unprecedented. We are on track for more illegal border crossings in 2021 than any time in the past 15 years—perhaps ever."

Biden is not only out-of-step with the public; he is at odds with the bishops as well.

The bishops along the border of the United States and northern Mexico released a joint statement in April saying, "Undoubtedly, nations have a right to maintain their borders. This is vital to their sovereignty and self-determination. At the same time, there is a shared responsibility of all nations to preserve human life and provide for safe, orderly, and humane immigration, including the right to asylum."

The Pew survey suggests that the public and these bishops are pretty much on the same page. We need to protect our borders and improve conditions for migrants. It is Biden who is out of sync.

A Lexis-Nexis search of Donald Trump and "we must protect our borders" turned up 884 instances where his name appeared with these words in a news story. A search of Joe Biden on this measure turned up one (that was over a year ago, and it was conditional in nature).

We need to know why. Why is there such reluctance on the part of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to speak forthrightly about this issue? Why do they seemingly want to have more illegal aliens in our country? Moreover, Harris

needs to stop with talk about “root causes.” It is a dodge: If we treated every problem this way, it would be a prescription for paralysis.

At the very least, Harris needs to speak directly to those who are suffering, as well as to border patrol agents who are burdened by current policies. That, however, cannot be done from Washington, D.C.

FLORIDA AND INDIANA LEAD ON SCHOOL CHOICE

Policymakers who wish to offer a preferential option for the poor should mirror recent legislation passed in Florida and Indiana, two states that have demonstrated the effectiveness of school vouchers.

Recently, Florida has expanded its existing school choice vouchers making them available for more families. Already one of the most ambitious voucher programs in the country, last academic year the state offered more than 36,000 students an average of \$7,000.

Additionally, Florida created special-needs scholarships for about 20,000 students. These scholarships are similar to education savings accounts that families can use for tutoring and related purposes. But perhaps one of the best elements of this is that it offers Florida students already enrolled in Catholic or charter schools eligibility for these vouchers.

Indiana, too, has recently expanded its decade-old voucher program. Indiana will now offer vouchers to 48,000 students a year. Families making \$145,000 a year would be eligible for

vouchers amounting to 90 percent of tuition support levels. Like Florida, the Hoosier State would establish education savings accounts for children with special needs. Further, Indiana's budget increases per student grants for charter schools.

In a recent interview, former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who signed Indiana's first school voucher bill into law, reflected on the success of the program. "Providing poor and minority families the same choice of schools that their wealthier neighbors enjoy is the purest example of 'social justice' in our society today."

WISCONSIN ATTORNEY GENERAL OVERREACHES

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul recently announced that he was going to launch an investigation into sexual abuse in the five dioceses of the Catholic Church in Wisconsin.

Bill Donohue wrote to him about his plan. "I am not sure how much you know about this issue," he said, "but you should know that *almost all the molesting priests (who comprised a very small portion of the clergy) are either dead or no longer in ministry.*" Donohue noted that he has a book coming out this fall on this subject.

"In the course of my research," Donohue said, "I found that there is virtually no segment of society where adults intermingle with minors where this has not been a problem, beginning, sadly, in the home. Will you undertake a probe of stepfathers and live-in-boyfriends? Trial lawyers have zero interest in doing so—there's no money in it for them. Will you

investigate all the clergy—probing all religions—or will you focus exclusively on Roman Catholic priests? Will you address the public schools?”

Donohue brought to Kaul’s attention a 2014 survey by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services which found that one in five students in the state (19.9%) said that someone forced them “to do sexual things they did not want to do.” In 2016, USA Today did a major study of this problem in the public schools across the nation. Wisconsin’s overall score was a “C,” but it received an “F” in “Sharing Misconduct Information.”

“In other words,” Donohue wrote, “Wisconsin shipped molesting teachers off to some other school without letting them know what they were getting. This is so common in the public schools that it is called ‘passing the trash.’ Regrettably, Wisconsin has lots of trash. USA Today found that 80 educators had their licenses revoked yet weren’t listed in the national clearinghouse of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification.”

It seems that some public officials in Wisconsin have an animus against the Catholic Church. In 2019, there was an attempt to bust the seal of the confessional—forcing priests to disclose confidential information they may have learned about sexual abuse. We asked at the time where the evidence was that this is such a problem. No one had any. We also asked if the lawyer-client privilege and the exemption afforded psychologists and psychiatrists would also be violated. Of course not. Alas, the bill died.

Donohue concluded by saying, “The only ones happy about an investigation of the Catholic Church are rapacious trial lawyers, motivated by greed and ideology, and anti-Catholic organizations such as Freedom From Religion Foundation (it is already cheering you on).”

The selective probing of old cases of abuse does nothing to further the cause of justice; it also smacks of bias. Moreover, given Wisconsin's record in the public schools, it appears there is much that needs to be done to ameliorate current conditions. It was on this basis that Donohue asked Kaul to reconsider his plan.