TESTIMONY OF THE CATHOLIC LEAGUE PROPOSED Int. 645-A

League president William Donohue wrote the following testimony. League communications director, Patrick Scully, read it on August 21 before the New York City Council.

“The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. We defend individual Catholics against discrimination and the Church against defamation.

“We oppose Bill NO. 645-A for three reasons: (a) it would unduly abridge the free speech rights of all anti-abortion protesters (b) it would unduly abridge the religious liberty rights of some anti-abortion protesters and (c) evidence of its necessity is lacking.

“Those who oppose abortion do so because they believe that innocent human life is lost when children are aborted. To selectively target these protesters is wrong constitutionally and wrong morally. It is wrong constitutionally because it violates the standard of viewpoint neutrality that undergirds First Amendment protections. It is wrong morally because it effectively treats anti-abortion protesters as second-class citizens.

“Bill NO. 645-A also undermines religious liberty. Catholics who protest abortion, for example, do so out of religious commitment. To lock up nuns and priests who stand near the entrance of abortion clinics holding signs saying, ‘Choose Life,’ is constitutionally and morally outrageous.

“Finally, there is no compelling evidence that the rights of anti-abortion protesters need to be further curtailed. This law is not being proposed because events demand it; rather it is being proposed because politics demand it. The laws on the

books provide sufficient safeguards to those who seek to enter an abortion clinic. Quite simply, there is no empirical evidence that supports the need for this bill.

“The Catholic League therefore urges that this bill be rejected.”

No vote has yet been taken on this bill. The reasons are wholly political. Our side, the pro-life side, dominated the hearing. But this is an election year and none of the mayoral candidates (which include Council Speaker Peter Vallone) want to draw too much attention to this bill even though all of them publicly support it. We will keep our members posted.