

# VICTORY! DURBIN DECLINES AWARD

[Bill Donohue](#)

Sen. Dick Durbin has declined the “Lifetime Achievement Award” that he was scheduled to receive from the Archdiocese of Chicago. This is exactly what the Catholic League was pressing him to do.

The Catholic League was the only lay Catholic organization in the nation to press Sen. Durbin to decline the award. Other groups targeted Chicago Archbishop Blase Cupich, putting them in direct opposition to the Catholic hierarchy. As lay Catholics, we chose to focus on the lay Catholic party to this controversy.

On September 23, I sent a [letter](#) to Sen. Durbin in the overnight mail—it was received the next morning—asking him to decline the award. I explained that when the news broke that he was to receive the award, it “created a firestorm in the Catholic community, involving both the clergy and the laity.” I stressed that by declining the award “you will help ameliorate Catholic discord,” and that “by putting the interests of the Catholic community above your own interests, it will only redound to your benefit.”

When it appeared that Durbin was not giving in, we asked our supporters to petition him to do so. On September 29, we [listed](#) the email of his chief of staff in a news release, asking our subscribers to pound away. They did. One day later, Durbin yielded. Such a sweet victory.

We commend Sen. Durbin for doing the right thing.

Pope Leo XIV was asked about the controversy and he said, “I’m not terribly familiar with the particular case,” adding that

“I think it is very important to look at the overall work that the senator has done...”

The Holy Father can be forgiven for not understanding the totality of the backlash over the award. The media, including the Catholic media, did a lousy job reporting on this issue. Fox News was the worst. They made it seem as though opposition to the award revolved around one issue, abortion. That was never the case.

In my letter to Durbin, I said that “the proximate cause of the backlash is your voting record on abortion,” but I hastened to add, “Your support for same-sex marriage, and your probing of the religious convictions of Catholic nominees for the federal bench, have also elicited much criticism.”

Regarding the latter issue, on September 23, prior to posting my open letter to Durbin, I [detailed](#) the senator’s longstanding assaults on Catholics seeking a seat on the federal bench.

His opposition to Circuit Court nominee William Pryor (2003), Supreme Court nominee John Roberts (2005), and Circuit Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett (2017), were all unseemly. He probed them on their Catholic convictions, effectively promoting a religious test. Unlike other lay Catholic groups, we protested what Durbin did in each of these cases when they occurred.

Pope Leo is right to say that no politician’s record can be accurately judged by looking at one issue. We are proud of the strategy we took, pointing out that Durbin’s record was soiled in *many* ways, therefore making him unsuitable for a Catholic award.

We are delighted with this outcome. Thanks to our base for contacting Durbin—you made it happen!