

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.