

WISCONSIN BILL ASSAULTS CONFESSIOAL SEAL

A bill to bust the seal of the confessional was scheduled to be introduced in late August 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 contacted every member of the Wisconsin legislature 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.

We urged Sen. Scott L. Fitzgerald, the Majority Leader, who is a Republican, to lead the opposition to this bill.