



# CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious  
and  
Civil Rights*

March 4, 2015

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VIA FAX & EMAIL

Supervisor Mark Farrell  
Board of Supervisors  
City Hall  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Dear Supervisor Farrell:

Yesterday, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution, introduced by you, on the rights of teachers and administrators who work for the Archdiocese of San Francisco. It contains several errors of fact. More important, it contains lies.

The biggest lie is found in paragraph three. "WHEREAS, the City of San Francisco also respects the autonomy of the Archdiocese of San Francisco...." It is a lie because most of what follows proves that you and your colleagues have nothing but contempt for the autonomy of the archdiocese. As such, your palpable hostility to the doctrinal prerogatives of the archdiocese has grave First Amendment implications.

It is not the business of the state to police the internal affairs of any religious institution. Were a clergyman to lecture the Board of Supervisors on what its employment policies ought to be, it would be greeted with howls of protest citing separation of church and state. The establishment provision of the First Amendment cuts both ways.

Almost every world religion in history, in both Eastern and Western civilization, has found homosexual behavior to be sinful. Yet you single out the Catholic Church for holding to this teaching—which we learned from Judaism—thus showing your discriminatory colors. Will you now seek to monitor the handbook of teachers used by ministers, rabbis, and imams in their schools?

It is flatly wrong to assert that provisions in the proposed faculty handbook raise "serious concerns about how they would impact a teacher's personal life" and the life of their students. As the archdiocese has repeatedly said, the personal lives of teachers is not its concern.

It is also flatly wrong to say that "San Francisco is known around the world as a place of inclusion, tolerance, and acceptance for individuals and their life choices, regardless of religion, sex, sexual orientation, or beliefs...." False. Your resolution is proof to the contrary: you seek to shove your secular values down the throat of the archdiocese.

Further proof that your self-congratulatory statement is wrong can be found by reviewing past court decisions against the Board of Supervisors. In 2006, the Catholic League, represented by the Thomas More Law Center, sued the Board of Supervisors for passing an anti-Catholic resolution: the Board accused the Vatican of promoting "hateful" teachings and for "meddling" in its affairs. What was the "meddling"? The Church holds to a different position on the issue of gay adoptions.

The Ninth Circuit rejected the lawsuit but not without controversy. Of the six judges who addressed the question of government hostility to religion, they split 3-3. Not exactly a ringing endorsement of the Board's alleged tolerance for religion. Now you and your colleagues have just added to this discredited legacy.

Your resolution, though mostly flawed, is correct on one important matter. You correctly say that the new handbook maintains that faculty "must refrain from public support of any cause or issue that is explicitly or implicitly contrary to that which the Catholic Church holds to be true...." How remarkable! Would you keep on staff those who publicly oppose your positions? Do you see how foolish this makes you look?

Finally, you and I both know that your bigoted resolution has no legal teeth. I would add that it has no moral teeth as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Donohue". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

William Donohue, Ph.D.  
President

cc: Board of Supervisors  
Richard Thompson, Thomas More Law Center