



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious
and
Civil Rights*

January 13, 2020

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William Donohue

Rep. Angela Romero
350 North State, Suite 350
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Dear Rep. Romero:

I understand that you have introduced a bill, HB90, that would remove the exemption afforded the clergy to keep confidential information learned in the confessional about the sexual abuse of minors. In essence, you would like to break the seal of Confession, thus vitiating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Roman Catholic Church.

I have two questions for you.

Speaking about the victims of sexual abuse, you have said, "Their perpetrators went to confession, confided in a religious leader, and nothing ever happened." What evidence do you have for making this remark?

Last year I asked a state lawmaker in California the same question. He sponsored a similar bill and, like you, he made a comment almost identical to the one you made. He could not offer any evidence. After we waged a vigorous campaign against him, he withdrew his bill.


The second question is this: Why are you seeking to breach the priest-penitent exemption, but are not seeking to violate the lawyer-client privilege or the exemption afforded psychologists and their patients? Do they not learn of sexual abuse behind closed doors?

You are treading on dangerous territory. When the government seeks to police the sacraments of the Catholic Church—or encroach on the tenets and practices of any world religion—it is gearing up for a court fight. The

First Amendment secures religious liberty, and that entails separation of church and state.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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

William Donohue, Ph.D.

President