



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

CAOC disappointed by Brown veto of molestation bill Will push anew to give sex crime victims shot at civil justice in court

SACRAMENTO (Oct. 12, 2013) – Consumer Attorneys of California President Brian Kabateck on Saturday expressed profound disappointment over Gov. Jerry Brown’s veto of a bill that would have opened courthouse doors anew for decades-old child molestation cases, giving victims of abuse a chance to hold accountable both sexual predators and the institutions that shielded them for years.

Brown’s veto of SB 131 by Sen. Jim Beall (D-San Jose) comes as a big loss for childhood victims of sexual abuse while protecting the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts of America, Swim USA and other organizations that for years did little to address concerns and shielded sexual predators in their ranks from proper accountability.

“I’m very disappointed,” Kabateck said. “This measure was narrowly tailored and would have greatly helped victims of childhood sexual abuse who need and deserve to have their day in court. All victims of abuse should have adequate access to the civil justice system.”

The Catholic Church and other organizations hit by molestation scandals had feared the public scrutiny that would come with an open court process. Those foes of SB 131 heavily lobbied the Legislature and governor. A church-affiliated group hired a half dozen lobbying firms and spent big money fighting SB 131. The effort by the church included visits by bishops to the Capitol as well as advocacy by priests from the pulpit to whip up parishioners who sent thousands letters and made scores of telephone calls to targeted lawmakers.

Over the past decade, California’s Catholic dioceses have paid \$1.2 billion in settlements and released thousands of confidential documents that showed church leaders conspired to shield admitted molesters from law enforcement. In 2002, the Legislature approved a bill that lifted the statute of limitations on lawsuits for all of 2003, allowing dozens of victims to have their day in court.

The key provision of Beall’s bill would have re-opened the window on the statute of limitations in molestation claims for another year, but only for a group who were 26 or older and missed the previous deadline because of abuse-related psychological problems. Advocates say loosening time limits is crucial in sex-abuse cases because it often takes decades for victims to realize or publicly admit that they were molested and seek legal recourse.

Kabateck vowed that CAOC would not give up this fight: “We will continue our efforts both in the Legislature and the courts to make the civil justice system available for these survivors of childhood sexual abuse.”

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs’ attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

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