



AP/World Wide News

Activist's trial begins

Pro-choice activist Connie Morse, of Pensacola, Fla., Feb. 21 walks past a pro-life demonstrator 'Pro Life' Anderson, of Reno, Nevada, outside the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Center in Pensacola, Fla. Michael Griffin is on trial inside the building for allegedly killing abortion doctor David Gunn. About two dozen demonstrators protested outside the courthouse.

Cook drops sex abuse suit against Cardinal Bernardin

CINCINNATI (CNS) — Steven J. Cook, who had accused Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of sexually abusing him in the 1970s, dropped his lawsuit against the Chicago prelate Feb. 28.

Cook told a federal judge in Cincinnati in court papers that he is no longer sure if his memories of the alleged abuse, which arose out of hypnosis sessions, are "true or accurate."

Cook's allegation that Cardinal Bernardin had sexually molested him once in the mid-1970s topped network newscasts and made Page One headlines when he filed a \$10 million lawsuit against the cardinal Nov. 12.

The suit was filed in federal court in Cincinnati, where Cardinal Bernardin was an archbishop and Cook was a high school student preparing to enter the seminary in the mid-'70s.

The Chicago archdiocesan Office of Communications said in a statement, "The withdrawal of charges is not part of any compromise or settlement. Neither the cardinal nor his attorneys, or anyone else, has offered anything in ex-

change for the action."

Cook did not withdraw his claims against Father Ellis Harsham, a Cincinnati archdiocesan priest whom he accuses of repeated acts of sexual abuse during the 1970s. But he removed Cardinal Bernardin from the list of co-defendants in his suit against the priest.

In a statement to U.S. District Court Judge S. Arthur Spiegel, Cook said that as a result of information learned since he filed his suit, he now realizes that the memories raised under hypnosis concerning abuse by Cardinal Bernardin are unreliable.

Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, called Cook's action a "complete vindication" of Cardinal Bernardin, who has maintained his complete innocence.

The NCCB president, in a statement released in Washington, said the Bernardin case has raised major questions "concerning the role of certain attorneys, psychiatrists and media in bringing reckless charges against innocent people."

Official: No reason to panic over H.R. 6

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A portion of an education bill about to go before the House of Representatives put home schoolers and Catholic school teachers in a frenzy over teacher certification, but a Catholic school official has insisted there is no reason to panic.

"You can't imagine the phone calls we've been getting. We're getting swamped," said Mercy Sister Lourdes Sheehan, education secretary for the U.S. bishops. Sister Sheehan has been assuring callers that "Catholic school members will not be adversely affected" by the proposed measure because "that was not its intention."

The measure in dispute is one added by Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., to legislation known as H.R.6, which includes the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. That act provides federal funds for various educational needs of students.

Miller's amendment requires that local school districts prove by July 1, 1998, that full-time teachers in schools under their jurisdiction are certified to teach the subjects they are assigned.

"The object of the amendment is accountability," said a statement from Miller's office. It said the amendment particularly referred to a portion of the H.R.6 bill establishing an \$800 million professional development program for teachers.

"With all of this money being spent on the professional development of teachers in our nation's public schools," the statement continued, "schools will stop the practice of assigning teachers to teach subjects for which they are ill-prepared."

Many people interpreted the amendment to include private, religious and home schools, and, prompted by religious broadcasters and home school associations, they showed their opposition in a major telephone campaign.

Miller, a senior member of the House Education and Labor Committee, received so many calls that his office put on a recorded message saying, "Mr. Miller supports H.R.6 and regrets any misunderstanding regarding its affects on home schoolers." The message also said Miller would support changes to the bill when it was considered by the House "to reaffirm home schoolers' rights while maintaining the integrity of other provisions of the legislation." The bill was scheduled to be discussed on the floor at the end of February.

Daniel Weiss, a spokesman for Miller, told Catholic News Service that opposition to the bill "did not originate with Catholic schools, but from those fundamentally opposed to government involvement" in education.

He also said the bill "never had anything to do with home schoolers" and it was his understanding that the language would be clarified to reveal its original intent — for public schools.

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