



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 2009

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Catholic Democrats Calls On Senator Brownback to Publicly Condemn Letter that Questions the Faithfulness of Seven Catholic Members of Congress

Comments Damaging to Body Politic, Catholic Community, and in Violation of Canon Law

Boston, MA - [Catholic Democrats](#) is calling on Senator Sam Brownback (R- KS), who converted to Catholicism in 2002, to publicly apologize for a [fundraising letter](#) that was sent out under his name and that uses Catholicism to attack six of his Democratic colleagues in the Senate and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, all of whom are Catholic. The letter is part of a fundraising campaign by a new undertaking called the "Catholic Advocate," a project of the Morley Institute for Church and Culture, headed by Deal Hudson, a Republican Catholic political strategist and ally of Karl Rove. The direct mail piece, made public by the [National Catholic Reporter](#) (NCR) on February 20th, asserts that the seven Democratic legislators misrepresent themselves as being Catholic by taking public policy views that advocate effective solutions for reducing the number of abortions in our country, rather than by supporting the traditional Republican focus on criminalization.

The fundraising letter quotes Senator Brownback as saying, "Real Catholics need a new voice - not the likes of Ted Kennedy and Nancy Pelosi who have campaigned as Catholics while voting to undermine the values we hold most dear." The letter also puts quotes around the word Catholic to describe the five Senators - John Kerry (D-MA), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Patty Murray (D-WA) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) - while claiming that these Senators are sponsoring the Freedom of Choice Act, an expired bill that has not been introduced in the current 111th Congress.

The NCR story quoted a Brownback spokesperson as saying, "Our Chief of staff ... had never seen, heard of, or approved (the letter)." On Monday, February 23rd, *Catholic Democrats* faxed an [appeal](#) (see below) to Senator Brownback's office urging the senator to issue a public disavowal of the letter and its contents, but was informed that the Senator's office planned no further public comment. The *Catholic Democrats* also expressed concern about a potential violation of postal regulations for the possible illicit use of Senator Brownback's name by Hudson's Morley Institute to raise funds through the U.S. Postal Service.

On Tuesday, February 24th, [Politico.com](#) released an email from Senator Brownback's Chief of Staff to Hudson, stating "Neither the Senator nor I had seen the letter or were aware of it. I figured out that you did get permission to use his name on the piece from a former staffer in February of last year." The reported "permission" was received by Deal Hudson approximately one year before the direct mailing in February 2009 and apparently included "permission" to reference then- primary candidate Senator Obama as President Obama in the letter.

"The non-approval approval, or the non-denial denial, by Senator Brownback's office obscures his position on the use of his name for this intolerable misuse of our Catholic faith. And it is not

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satisfactory," said Steve Krueger, National Director of the *Catholic Democrats*. "This regrettable letter, which is truly an affront to the greater Catholic community and to all people of good will, must be repudiated with a public condemnation of the letter and a public apology by Senator Brownback to the seven Catholic Congressional leaders whose good names were disparaged for fundraising purposes."

"While we have come to expect such incendiary and conflict-ridden statements from Deal Hudson in the name of electing Republicans, it is disheartening that a United States Senator would allow his name to be used in such an uncharitable way," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, President of *Catholic Democrats*. "Hudson has spent years claiming that criminalizing abortion is the only issue that matters. But the recent presidential election demonstrates that Catholics support more constructive policies that seek to reduce abortions, as well as action on a whole host of other moral issues. It is unconscionable that Hudson and his Morley Institute would appoint themselves as arbiters of who *is* and who is *not* Catholic. Senator Brownback's personal silence has indicated his consent to the kind of smear that Deal Hudson continues to direct toward life-long faithful Catholics who have reached a different conclusion on the best strategy to reduce abortions in this country."

The Brownback letter also stipulates that he and the "Catholic Advocate" are conveying "with Christian charity... fraternal correction" to the Senators named in their letter. In response, *Catholic Democrats* has attached a [one-page canon law brief](#) by Dr. Nicholas P. Cafardi - dean emeritus and professor of law at Duquesne University, and a canon lawyer - on how the letter by Hudson using Brownback's name violates Canon law tenets regarding protecting an individual's good name. Canon 220 states "No one is permitted to harm illegitimately the good reputation which a person possesses nor to injure the right of any person to protect his or her own privacy."

"The proper application of this canon would prevent individual Catholics from opining publicly, say to the media or in any other public way, e.g., a mass mailing, about whether or not another member of the Church was in fact a member in good standing of the Church," said Dr. Cafardi. "Only one authority in the Church has the ability to make these kinds of judgments, and that is the person's own proper pastors, and these judgments when made are, in accordance with Canon 220, to be kept between the pastor and the individual. They are not to be shared with the public."

//End

February 23, 2009

BY FAX

Senator Sam Brownback
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brownback:

We are writing you today as fellow Catholics with a mutual concern for the story "Brownback questions political foes' Catholicism," reported on the National Catholic Reporter Web site last Friday. We regret, as we are sure you do, that the Morley Institute for Church and Culture illicitly used your good name and signature in a letter that demeans the good names of six of your esteemed colleagues from the Senate as well as Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

It is our understanding, and as you may be well aware, that there are statements in the letter that violate the Church's canon Law. Canon 220, often referred to as part of the "Bill of Rights" for members of the Church, stipulates that every Catholic is guaranteed a right to their good name and a right to their

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privacy in the Church. We believe that under the Church's canon law only an individual's proper pastor may make judgments such as those presented in the letter and, if he chooses to do so, those judgments may only be expressed privately. Furthermore, we are concerned that the mailing of this letter may represent a potential violation of postal regulations by the Morley Institute for issuing a letter in your name - on an unauthorized basis - to raise funds through the US Postal Service.

While we may disagree on certain public policy issues, including the best strategy to effectively reduce the number of abortions in our country, we believe that we could agree that the disparaging statements made in this letter are unacceptable.

It is our hope that we would share a concern for the degree of divisiveness that this letter painfully imposes not only on our nation but also on our Church. Both are in need of healing. It is also our hope that we would share a belief that there is a better way, rooted in our faith, to help reconcile inevitable differences between people of goodwill who are striving to effectively address the moral challenges of our time.

For these reasons we urge you to publicly disavow the letter and its contents. We further urge you to publicly disavow such actions or statements by any person or organization in the future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter - we would welcome the opportunity.

Sincerely yours,
Steven A. Krueger
National Director

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About Catholic Democrats

Catholic Democrats is an association of state based groups representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, and advancing a public understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and its potential to help solve the broad range of problems confronting all Americans. For more information about Catholic Democrats please go to www.catholicdemocrats.org