

September 25, 2012

The Honorable Robert E. Andrews
2265 Rayburn House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Andrews:

During a September 12th subcommittee hearing on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and higher education, you displayed great insensitivity to the serious concerns of Christians and other people of faith. On behalf of our constituents and all people of faith, we ask for your apology and for a clarification of your position on the NLRB's violations of the First Amendment and harassment of religious educators.

Among three key topics of the September 12th hearing was the NLRB's repeated violations of the constitutional rights of religious colleges and universities. The NLRB claims authority to evaluate the strength of religious identity at religious colleges and universities, and in several cases has claimed jurisdiction over these institutions' negotiations with faculty members, thereby entangling the NLRB in religious concerns. The NLRB has ignored rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia which exempt religious colleges and their teaching faculty from NLRB oversight.

These are serious constitutional and religious liberty concerns, yet on September 12th you opposed even allowing the opportunity for religious educators to explain their plight to Congress. At the hearing, you claimed that these were not "compelling questions" worthy of a hearing. To the contrary, the growing threats to the religious liberty of Americans across the country deserve multiple hearings and legislative action. We are shocked and appalled by your insensitivity to American educators' concerns about violations of their constitutional rights.

Moreover, you outrageously characterized the hearing as a "classic case of Nero fiddling while Rome burns," apparently to color your argument that the hearing was a waste of time. This was most unfortunate and a great insult to Christians. Emperor Nero was a tyrant who hated Christianity and exacted a gruesome revenge on Christians who were blamed for fires in Rome. Also, today "Rome" is the seat of the Catholic Church, which has been the victim not only of the NLRB's harassment of Catholic colleges and universities, but also other religious liberty violations like the Obama administration's mandate for insurance coverage of abortion-causing drugs and sterilizations. Whether intended or not, these were exactly the wrong images to put forward while you argued that the NLRB's violations of the First Amendment are unworthy of a Congressional hearing. Indeed, in America it is only the First Amendment that stands in the way of executive tyranny and religious persecution.

Congressman Andrews, you may disagree with the fears of many religious leaders and people of faith about the growing threats to religious liberty. We ask, however, that you not attempt to silence our voice before Congress. We request your apology to Christians and all people of faith for showing such insensitivity to their concerns and historical trials, and we invite you to clarify your position on the NLRB's violations of the First Amendment.

Sincerely,

(all signers below)

Gary Bauer
President
American Values

John F. Kippley
President
Natural Family Planning International

Morton Blackwell
Chair
The Weyrich Lunch

Rev. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J., Ph.D., S.T.L.
President
Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

L. Brent Bozell III
Chairman
ForAmerica

Barbara Ledeen
Director
Women United

John Brehany, Ph.D., S.T.L.
Executive Director
Catholic Medical Association

Mario H. Lopez
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Hispanic Leadership Fund

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President
Catholic League for Religious and Civil
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Gary Marx
Executive Director
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Maureen Ferguson
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The Catholic Association

Tom McClusky
Senior Vice President
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Day Gardner, Ph.D.
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National Black Pro-Life Union

Sister Renee Mirkes, O.S.F., Ph.D.
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Peggy Nance
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Michael O'Dea
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Patrick J. Reilly
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