



Brian Curran
President, District of Columbia Board
Ancient Order of Hibernians in America
12608 Beechfern Lane
Bowie, Maryland

May 11, 2020

Chief Judge James McKay
President, Ancient Order of Hibernians in America
Post Office Box 539
West Caldwell, New Jersey

Worthy National President McKay,

We write to you as members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians to register our sadness with the selection of Brother Brendan Boyle as the recipient of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Medal in 2020. Brother Boyle is a Member of the Congress of the United States representing the Second District of Pennsylvania. Since his election in 2016, Brother Boyle has consistently used his position as an elected official to support abortion and has been lauded by organizations with principles contrary to those held by our Order. On other matters important to the Order, Brother Boyle's work had been worthy of recognition, and we discuss this herein. We do not believe it is our place as individuals or as an Order to pass judgment on another's level of Catholicism however it is certainly our responsibility to uphold the principles of our Order. Regrettably, the nominators in this case erred and the vetting process is so thin that it creates inconsistencies which are problematic. The weight of the Order's highest honor is not appropriate given Brother Boyle's publicly espoused position on abortion.

By way of fact-setting, we acknowledge that the John F. Kennedy Memorial Medal is an honor bestowed jointly by the AOH and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Incorporated. We also recognize that this correspondence follows the selection of Brother Boyle for award. An administrative issue during the balloting process resulted in at least one elector, myself, not receiving a ballot. We accept that this mistake was not ill-intended, but it is important for us to acknowledge it as a factor in the timeliness of this correspondence. Had I received due notice of Brother Boyle's nomination, I would have raised the concerns herein to the electors during the balloting process.

We are not qualified to judge another brother or sister's level of Catholicism. We do however believe that Brother Boyle stands in opposition to the principles of the Order, specifically by failing to, "protect and defend all life, born and unborn," one of the Order's constitutionally stated purposes. We pray for Brother Boyle and firmly believe in redemption and shared responsibility to support brother and sister Hibernians who have strayed from the principles of our Order. We must ask ourselves how this reflects on the import of moral principles of our Order, how to reinstate our credibility as a Catholic organization, and what modifications must be made to the nominating process to avoid such a paradoxical situation in the future.

NARAL Pro-Choice America has published a summary of Brother Boyle's voting record on life-choice matters since his installation to the Congress in 2016. Over the four years since, he has earned a one-hundred percent "score" from NARAL. Bestowing the Order's highest honor is incongruous with the Brother's public and unapologetic position on the matter of abortion. We would be equally as unsupportive of an otherwise-qualified ardent pro-life selectee who was a publicly outspoken opponent of a free and united Ireland – we suspect members of the Order's leadership would be as well.

At the core of any organization are the questions of "why" and "who." The AOH is an Irish-American Catholic organization. Our National Constitution charges us to "aid and advance...the aspirations and endeavors of the Irish people for complete and absolute independence, promoting peace and unity for all Ireland," and "[t]o protect and defend all life, born and unborn." Some members have quipped that there are "two Orders," referring to a divide between a strong Catholic segment of our membership and a strong Irish-unity segment, implied to be mutually exclusive. We do not believe this is the case. Like science and religion, we firmly believe, as our guiding document dictates, that we, members of the AOH are unified in support of human rights, including Irish independence and protection for human life. There is no question that the causes of Irish unity and of protection of life, born and unborn, are moral principles of the Orders.

The AOH Constitution makes it incumbent on the nominators for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Medal and the Sean MacBride Humanitarian Award to "certify that nominees do not stand in opposition to the moral principles espoused by the [AOH]." In this respect and in this instance, our brother nominators failed the Order. We understand from Vice President Daniel O'Connell that there is no vetting process for these awards beyond the certification of the nominators. It should concern us all that the nominating process for the Order's highest awards lacks any formal vetting or oversight process to verify that nominees' principles are consistent with the Order's. The reliance on an individual or division to vouch for a nominee creates inconsistency and as such, has the potential to dilute the meaningfulness of the awards.

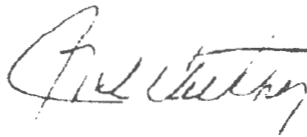
What does it say about an organization that ignores its principles, whether in whole or in part? We fear that the implied message in honoring Brother Boyle in this manner dilutes the value of the Award for now and for the future. Further, it causes damage to the credibility of the Order when we publicly promote any person who staunchly opposes the principles of the Order and the principles of the holy Catholic Church. Brother Boyle's work on matters of Irish independence, particularly given the historical import of the Congress of the United States on such matters and given the recent impact of Great Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, is worthy of honor. The Order accommodates a variety of manners to honor its members for worthy work, and Brother Boyle's dedication ought to be recognized appropriately. The Order's highest honor, however, is not appropriate given his legislative action in support of abortion.

Faith is a journey. None of us is a perfect Catholic or a perfect Irish specimen. It is not our place to make any determination about any brother or sister's status as a practicing Catholic, and we make no attempt to suggest the Order should do this. We do believe that the lack of a vetting process creates inconsistencies. This is problematic, and we owe it to ourselves to protect the moral principles and credibility of the Order to ensure this problem is corrected. To this end, we have been in discussions about correcting the gap in our nominating and vetting process by proposing an amendment to the AOH Constitution. We would welcome feedback, input, and insight from any brothers on this matter so that, when convened in unity in Orlando, we can right our process in a unified manner. We will continue to pray for Brother Boyle and for you, Worthy President; no hope is lost when we are willing to confront our shortcomings and take active steps to correct them.

In Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity,



Brian Curran
President, District of Columbia Board



John McCarthy
President, Virginia State Board



Michael McConnell
President, Maryland State Board

Cc: LAOH National President
LAOH National Board
AOH State Presidents
LAOH State Presidents