

Senator Chambers, would you like to close?

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Yes, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Legislature, I have made some critical remarks about some of the hierarchy in the Catholic Church and now I am going to read an article from the World-Herald dated March 21st, 1990. "Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Bernardin said Tuesday night that the church shouldn't punish Catholic public officials for differing with church leaders on abortion. All public officials, Catholics as well as others, 'should be held accountable for their positions,' the Chicago cardinal said in a speech prepared for delivery at Georgetown University. 'Indeed, there are times when criticism is called for. It is important, however, that we continue to engage them and not cut them off,' said Bernardin, one of the church's most prominent speakers on abortion. His comments came four months after a fellow bishop banned a Catholic California assemblywoman from receiving communion because of her public stance in favor of abortion rights. Lucy Killea won election to the California Senate after the widely publicized action take by Bishop Leo T. Maher in response to her television ads focusing on abortion. Bernardin noted that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops voted last November for a resolution declaring: 'No Catholic can responsibly take a pro-choice stand when the choice in question involves the taking of innocent life.'" And then the quote continues in the next paragraph. "'In accord with the bishops' statement, I am firmly committed to the position that public officials who recognize the evil of abortion have a responsibility to limit its extent, to work for its prevention and to protect unborn life,' said the cardinal, a former head of the bishops' Pro-Life Committee. He said the church has a clear right to involve itself in public policy controversies such as abortion. However, he said, 'I believe that the church can be most effective in the public debate on abortion through moral persuasion, not punitive measures.' Bernardin did not mention the California case by name---nor other recent politician-church leader disputes such as the one involving New York Governor Mario Cuomo and a bishop who suggested Cuomo risked going to hell because of his stance on abortion." Cardinal Bernardin takes a wise, practical point of view. Nobody, even myself, who am probably deemed to be less religious than anybody on this floor, would deny to any religious organization its right to try to influence its members through persuasion and whatnot. If it wants to inject itself into politics, I say, let it do so, but let it lose its tax exempt status and become a politicking lobbying group like every