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INDEPENDENT COMPENSATION PROGRAM FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY DIOCESAN PRIESTS IN CALIFORNIA CONCLUDES

Program paid out a total of \$23,970,000 to individuals who were abused as minors by diocesan priests in six California dioceses

LOS ANGELES – SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 --- With a total of \$23,970,000 paid to victims/survivors who were abused as minors by diocesan priests in six California dioceses, the Independent Compensation Program (ICP) for Victims of Sexual Abuse by Diocesan Priests in California is preparing to conclude, having finished processing the last claim. The announcement was made by the Independent Oversight Committee (IOC), whose members include former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, former Governor Gray Davis, and business leader and 24th Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Maria Contreras-Sweet.

The ICP was launched in September 2019 to provide any victim/survivor of childhood sexual abuse by a diocesan priest from any of the six participating dioceses the opportunity to seek a non-adversarial resolution, regardless of when the abuse occurred. The six participating dioceses were Fresno, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Together, the participating dioceses comprise more than 10 million Catholics, or about 80 percent of California's Catholic population.

The program was run by two nationally recognized mediators and private compensation program administrators, Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros. The ICP Administrators were vested with absolute and independent discretion to determine each victim/survivor's eligibility and settlement offer. While the participating dioceses cooperated with the ICP Administrators, neither of the participating dioceses, nor the IOC had any authority to overrule the Administrator's determinations. Participation in the ICP was confidential and voluntary, and participants were not required to have counsel. However, those that did not have a lawyer were provided one at no charge to ensure they each understood before they accepted the terms of the settlement.

"No settlement alone will ever correct the pain or injustice of childhood sexual abuse. Victims deserve accountability, which is why I signed a law in 2003 reopening the civil statute of limitations for childhood sexual abuse," said former California Governor Gray Davis. "Reopening the statute of limitations resulted in over \$1.2 billion dollars in payouts to victims. In 2020 the State again reopened and extended the civil statute of limitations. Notwithstanding the change in State law, 197 victim/survivors opted for the ICP over civil litigation, thus, reinforcing the importance of having a parallel, non-adversarial, and confidential alternative to civil litigation. We understood some victims/survivors would only come forward if they could maintain their privacy," continued Governor Davis. "Unfortunately, without a guarantee of privacy, some victim/survivors would not have come forward and would not have a remedy. In that context, the ICP functioned precisely as it was envisioned, and proved to be a valuable alternative for victim/survivors. We thank the ICP and its Administrators for their hard work, relentless attention to detail, and mostly for their victim/survivor centered compassion and empathy in administering this program."

“It was particularly important that we offered a program that provided victim/survivors of sexual abuse with a viable non-adversarial and confidential alternative to a long and protracted litigation process,” said former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta.

The program accomplished its intent because of its speed of resolution, confidentiality and transparency of process. Of the total 929 individuals who newly reported as victims registered on the ICP website www.CaliforniaDiocesesICP.com, a total of 580 claims were determined and a total of \$23,970,000 in compensation was paid out by all dioceses to 197 individuals.

“I am pleased the ICP was committed to a process that treated all victim/survivors, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, with dignity and compassion,” said former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Maria Contreras-Sweet. “It was particularly important that the ICP process offered victim/survivors some sense of justice and validation for the inexcusable trauma they endured.”

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