

## **Stamford Advocate**

### **Supreme Court Justice Denies Diocese of Bridgeport Request to Keep Records Sealed** **High Court Justice Denies Bid to Seal Abuse Records**

By Noelle Frampton  
Staff Writer

August 25, 2009

NEW HAVEN -- The Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport may soon have to unseal thousands of documents generated by lawsuits alleging sexual abuse by priests now that a U.S. Supreme Court judge has denied the diocese's request to keep them sealed.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg on Tuesday denied the Bridgeport diocese's request to continue a stay on the release of the papers until the full court decides whether to review the case.

But the diocese hasn't given up in its long fight to keep more than 12,000 pages from 23 lawsuits sealed, releasing a statement that it is "disappointed" by Ginsberg's ruling but "intends to proceed with its announced determination to ask the full U.S. Supreme Court to review the important constitutional issues that this case presents."

Diocese spokesman Joseph McAleer declined further comment in an e-mail Tuesday evening.

The documents have been sealed since the diocese settled the lawsuits in 2001 and paid victims more than \$30 million. They could provide details on how retired New York Cardinal Edward Egan handled the allegations when he was bishop in Bridgeport.

Four newspapers asked for the records, and the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in May that they should be unsealed.

In June, the diocese asked the state's top court to reconsider, but the court refused. Then it went to the nation's highest court in July, citing constitutional rights and privacy issues in a renewed bid to block release of the documents.

The diocese had contended that the Superior Court judge who initially ordered the release was biased because he was on a special state Judicial Branch committee exploring how to make the state courts more transparent along with a reporter whose newspaper was seeking release of the documents.

The claims contained in the records date as far back as the 1970s and '80s and include allegations that Egan tried to hide the abuse of children by diocesan priests.

Attorneys representing victims of alleged abuse accused the church hierarchy of ignoring allegations, shifting accused priests from parish to parish and failing to report complaints to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

The total amount of money the diocese has spent in the legal battles remains unclear.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.