



DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE

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Official Statement of Bishop Steven Biegler, Diocese of Cheyenne

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Response to no criminal charges against former Wyoming bishop

The Diocese of Cheyenne recently was told that the Natrona County District Attorney Office decided not to prosecute former Bishop Joseph Hart. The Diocese of Cheyenne has fully cooperated with law enforcement during the past two years that they have been investigating this case. The diocese understands and appreciates that the decision to pursue a criminal case rests solely with the DA's Office. Proving the charges beyond a reasonable doubt is a high standard of proof. The diocese also understands that a criminal case requires a unanimous jury verdict in order to convict.

This decision not to pursue a criminal case does not mean that the victims are not credible. Once again, I commend the victims who have spoken courageously about their abuse. I also stand behind the determination made by the Diocese of Cheyenne that allegations of sexual abuse against former Bishop Hart are credible.

The Diocese of Cheyenne is adamant in a sincere quest for justice for everyone. A just resolution is essential for the victims and their family members, but also for the clergy and laity in the Diocese of Cheyenne and the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph's. The Diocese of Cheyenne hopes that the D.A.'s Office will offer an adequate account of the reasons for its decision not to pursue criminal charges. This would assist the public in understanding why such a decision was reached.

It is important to differentiate between criminal charges and the canonical crimes being investigated by Church authorities. That process continues under the oversight of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith at the Vatican, and the Diocese of Cheyenne has not received new information on the status of the case.

Bishop Steven Biegler
Diocese of Cheyenne