



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Attorney General Peter F. Neronha

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Third indictment stemming from Attorney General's comprehensive review of clergy child sexual abuse allegations

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Attorney General Peter F. Neronha announced that the Statewide Grand Jury has returned an **11-count indictment charging a former priest** in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence with sexually assaulting a male victim under the age of 14 between 1989 and 1990, following an investigation by the Office of the Attorney General and the Rhode Island State Police.

On November 3, 2021, the Statewide Grand Jury returned a sealed indictment charging James Silva (age 81) with two counts of first-degree child molestation and nine counts of second-degree child molestation.

After the sealed indictment was returned, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Silva, who was arraigned yesterday at a hearing before Superior Court Associate Justice Maureen B. Keough.

As alleged in the indictment, the charges against the defendant stem from his actions while he served as Interim Director and Assistant Director at the Office of Ministerial Formation within the Diocese of Providence from 1986 until 1991.

Silva's bail was set at \$50,000 with surety. The Court also issued a No Contact Order between Silva and his alleged victim, as well as any other person under the age of 18.

Silva previously pleaded guilty on March 16, 1995, to one count of second-degree sexual assault. He received a seven-year suspended sentence with probation.

Silva was laicized from the church in 1993.

“Our months-long, broad investigation of clergy child sexual abuse in Rhode Island has had, from its inception, two principal purposes: to prepare a comprehensive report of our findings regarding such abuse and the Diocese’ response to it, and along the way bringing individual criminal cases as they are developed, where the facts as alleged warrant them,” said Attorney General Neronha. “This is the third case this Office has brought against a clergy member based on child sexual abuse allegations. Our investigation remains active and ongoing. I am grateful to the Rhode Island State Police for their partnership throughout the investigation.”

In November 2020, a Statewide Grand Jury returned an indictment charging former Woonsocket priest John Petrocelli with multiple counts of child molestation. The case against Petrocelli is being prosecuted in Providence County Superior Court.

On May 5, 2021, a Statewide Grand Jury returned an indictment charging former Smithfield Priest Edward Kelley with multiple counts of sexual assault. The case against Kelley is being prosecuted in Providence County Superior Court.

The Attorney General's Office has been conducting a review of allegations of clergy child sexual abuse and the Diocese of Providence's handling of such allegations. In connection with that review, the Office has gained access to Diocese records. Where the Office's review develops evidence of alleged criminal misconduct, the Office and the Rhode Island State Police are committed to conducting a thorough investigation of such alleged misconduct and bringing criminal charges where appropriate.

The review remains ongoing.

Assistant Attorney General Timothy G. Healy and Special Assistant Jonathan E. Burke of the Office of the Attorney General and Detective Jared Andrews of the Rhode Island State Police are leading the investigation and prosecution of the case.

An indictment, information, or complaint is merely an allegation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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[indictment.pdf](#)

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