

July 19, 2007 - HOUSE SNUBS EGAN

By GEOFF EARLE , New York Post Correspondent

July 19, 2007 -- WASHINGTON - Congress is trying to "excommunicate" Edward Cardinal Egan by refusing to pass a routine resolution honoring the New York Archdiocese simply because it mentions the archbishop's name, The Post has learned.

In a stunning personal slap at the leader of 2.5 million Catholics in New York, a powerful Democrat-controlled House committee has demanded that Egan's name be stricken from the commemoration of the archdiocese's 200th anniversary.

Rep. Vito Fossella (R-S.I.), the resolution's chief sponsor, said it appears the committee wants the cardinal's name deleted because of the Catholic Church's sexual-abuse scandal.

The bipartisan resolution, which has 60 co-sponsors, is a simple, nonbinding, two-page statement lauding the archdiocese.

The ninth paragraph contains a line that proved radioactive with the committee's Democratic majority.

It states: "Whereas the Archdiocese of New York is currently under the spiritual guidance of His Eminence M. Cardinal Egan, who was installed on June 19, 2000, and elevated to Cardinal on February 21, 2001."

According to Fossella, staff on the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, chaired by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), told his aides the resolution wouldn't be approved unless he agreed to cut the Egan line.

Fossella, who is Catholic, refused.

"It's just insulting and outrageous," Fossella fumed. "Given all the wonder and good deeds of the archdiocese, to be dictated and told that his name should be removed is unconscionable and unacceptable."

Fossella says committee staff gave no specific reason why the resolution couldn't move forward if it mentioned Egan, other than saying it was required "in light of the sex-abuse cases" that have roiled the church.

This week's \$660 million settlement between the Los Angeles Archdiocese and 500 alleged victims claiming abuse apparently compounded the matter.

"Then we were told today that, in light of the Los Angeles settlement in the last few days, in order for this resolution to proceed we'd have to remove [Egan's] name and I said no," said Fossella. "I am not going to agree to remove Cardinal Egan's name."

Egan got caught up in the abuse scandal when he was bishop of Bridgeport, Conn., in the 1990s and allowed priests accused of abusing their parishioners to remain in the church.

A spokeswoman for Government Reform Chairman Waxman had no immediate comment.