

Reveal



from The Center for Investigative Reporting
(<http://www.revealnews.org/>)

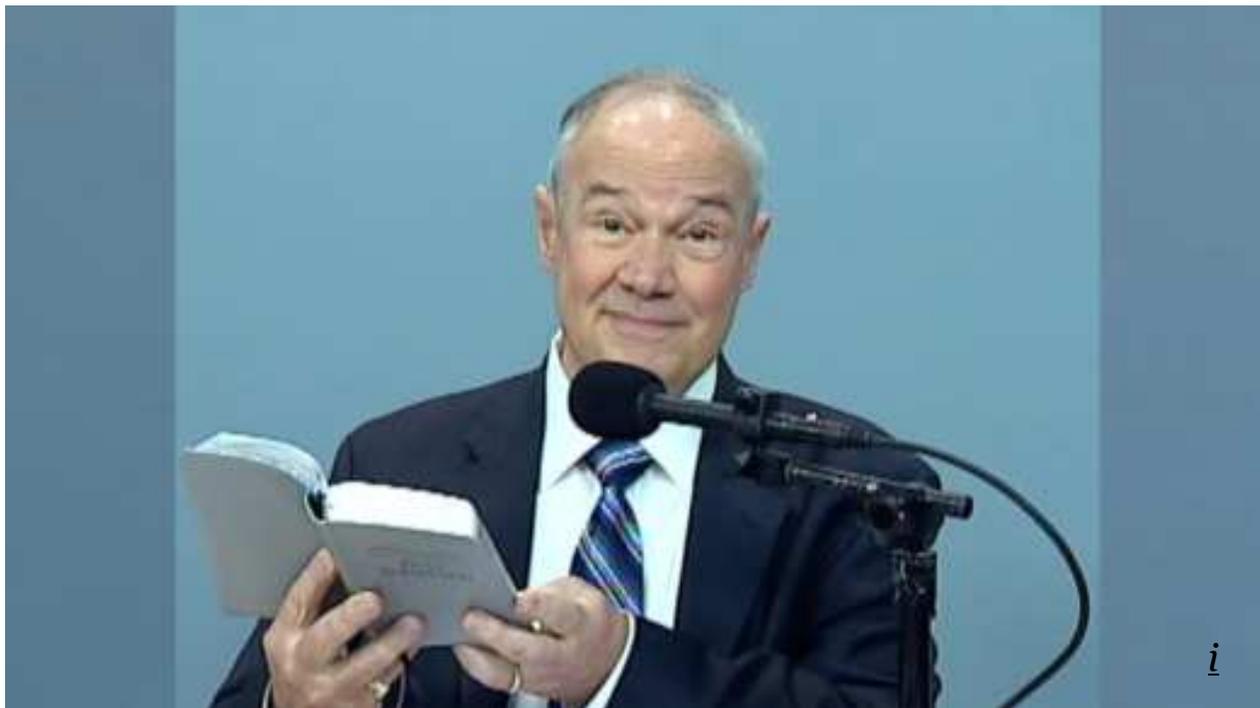


SHARE

Jehovah's Witness leader says child sex abuse claims are 'lies'

Topics: [Religion](http://www.revealnews.org/topic/religion/) / [Religion and Government](http://www.revealnews.org/topic/religion-and-government/)

By [Trey Bundy](http://www.revealnews.org/author/trey-bundy/) / March 6, 2015



GET THE FULL INVESTIGATION

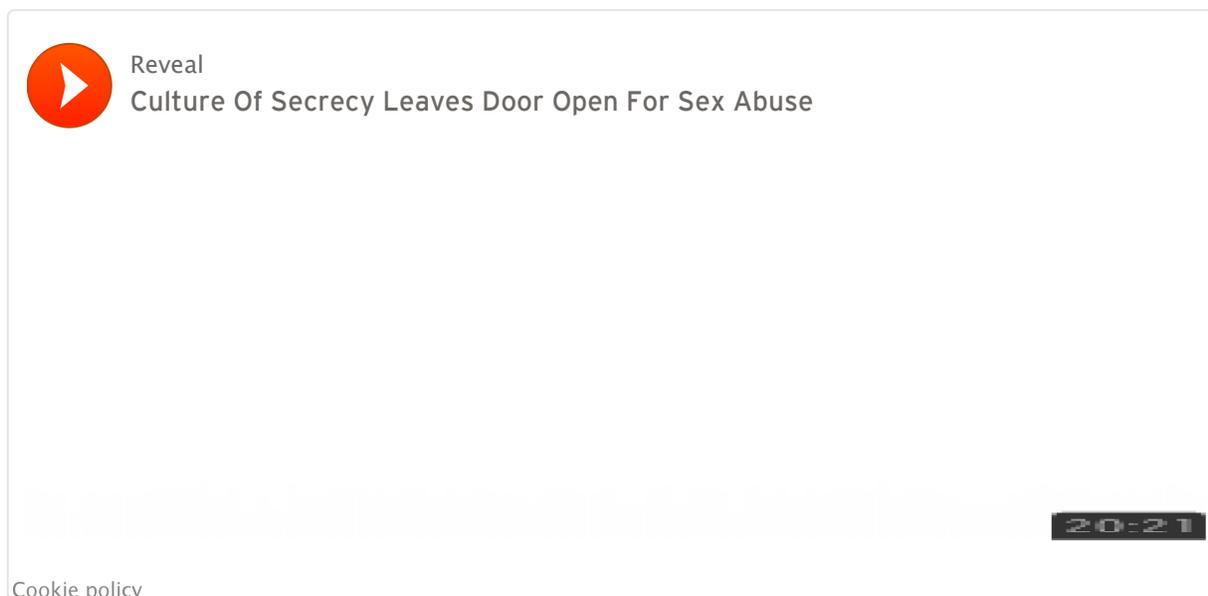
Read Trey Bundy's [original \(http://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/\)](http://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/) report on how the Jehovah's Witnesses use the First Amendment to hide child sexual abuse claims.

A top Jehovah's Witness leader – speaking through a video posted on the organization's official website last week – denied allegations that the religion provides a safe haven for child sexual abusers.

“If anybody takes action against someone who would threaten our young ones, and takes action to protect our young ones, it's Jehovah's organization,” Stephen Lett, a member of the Governing Body, said into the camera. “We reject outright such lies.”

Lett's address appeared to be a response to a recent [Reveal investigation \(http://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/\)](http://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/) documenting how Jehovah's Witnesses policies, dating back 25 years, have instructed elders to keep child sexual abuse secret from law enforcement and even their own congregations.

LISTEN TO THE SEGMENT



In the 10-minute video (http://tv.jw.org/#video/VODProgramsEvents/pub-jwbmw_E_201502_5_VIDEO), Lett urged followers to maintain unity – or “oneness” – in the face of “false stories that are designed to separate us from Jehovah’s organization.”

“As an example,” Lett said, “think about the apostate-driven lies and dishonesties that Jehovah’s organization is permissive toward pedophiles. I mean, that is ridiculous, isn’t it?”

Despite his denial, Lett’s address was a rare acknowledgement. Although the organization has been hit with an increasing barrage of child sexual abuse lawsuits in recent years, Jehovah’s Witness leaders have gone to extremes to avoid speaking publicly about the issue. In a San Diego lawsuit last year, Gerrit Lösch, the longest-serving member of the Governing Body, refused to testify, in violation of a subpoena.

Reveal's investigation also found that the organization has collected detailed information on child abusers in its congregations but repeatedly has refused to produce that information in court.

Lett's video set off an immediate reaction from viewers around the world, who weighed in with hundreds of comments on social media and anti-Jehovah's Witnesses websites dismissing Lett's remarks. A group called Advocates for Awareness of Watchtower Abuses (named for the Jehovah's Witnesses' parent corporation, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society) produced a mashup of Lett's video cut together with Reveal's recent television segment on the PBS NewsHour.

Lett did not return calls seeking comment. Jehovah's Witnesses say their child abuse policies are sound because they're based on Scripture. In Lett's video, he said that "Satan's organization" – which the religion considers the secular world, including media and law enforcement – works to disrupt God's will by causing divisions between the Witnesses.

"Because any human who tries to get us to compromise Bible principles really is an agent of Satan," Lett said.

This story was edited by Fernando Diaz and copy edited by Nikki Frick.

Trey Bundy can be reached at tbundy@cionline.org (<mailto:tbundy@cionline.org>). Follow him on Twitter: [@TreyBundy](https://twitter.com/treybundy) (<https://twitter.com/treybundy>).

[About Us \(http://www.revealnews.org/about-us/\)](http://www.revealnews.org/about-us/)

[Privacy Policy \(http://www.revealnews.org/privacy-policy/\)](http://www.revealnews.org/privacy-policy/)

[RSS \(http://www.revealnews.org/feed/\)](http://www.revealnews.org/feed/)