

IN FOCUS

RIGHT WING WATCH



THE WAR ON WOMEN

**How the War on Women Became Mainstream:
*Turning Back the Clock in Tea Party America***



INTRODUCTION

In February 2012 the state of Texas decided to cut off reproductive and preventative health services to 130,000 low-income women. The staggering move caps what has been an escalating war on women's health in state legislatures and in the U.S. Capitol since Tea Party-backed Republican majorities took control of the U.S. House and the majority of statehouses and took a determined minority in the U.S. Senate. While anti-woman rhetoric has been a mainstay of right-wing politics for decades, in the past two years that rhetoric has been turned into a record number of laws – and hurt a record number of women.

Texas's move is extreme, but it's not unusual. In fact, when it comes to women's health, Republicans in the U.S. Congress and in the race for the presidency are trying to remake America in Texas's image. In refusing funding for its women's health programs, Texas has jeopardized women's health – putting the burden especially on low-income women – and increased the risk of unwanted pregnancies, the main reason for abortions. Eliminating the entire federal family-planning program – a step supported by every Republican in the U.S. House and both major GOP presidential contenders – would do the same on a national scale, all while costing taxpayers billions of dollars in increased health-care expenses resulting from the lack of preventative care.

One year ago, People For the American Way issued a report on the unprecedented barrage of antichoice bills being unleashed by newly empowered state legislatures. In the year since, perhaps sensing that their window of opportunity might be drawing to a close, far-right national and state lawmakers, in coordination with Religious Right activists, have expanded their attacks. They are targeting not just abortion rights, but also access to birth control and preventative care, as well as contemporary views of women's roles in the workplace, the family and the halls of power.

What follows are dispatches from the varied fronts in the growing War on Women.

THE BATTLE AGAINST BIRTH CONTROL

Texas's decision to take away preventative health care from 130,000 women overnight is the product of a decades-long struggle against women's health care that advanced dramatically with the Right's political victories in 2010. It is also a case study of what the Tea Party's anti-woman rhetoric looks like when it becomes law and is applied to millions of people. Texas has actually done what right-wing activists and politicians around the country say they want to do – and it's not pretty.

The Texas legislature started chipping away at women's health care when it voted to cut family planning funding by two-thirds in October 2011. The state's Republican leaders then became locked in a battle with Washington over funding for Planned Parenthood. Texas's Women's Health Program is largely financed by \$35 million in federal funds, which the federal government will not let the state withhold from qualified providers – including Planned Parenthood. In response, Texas's legislature and Gov. Rick Perry have decided to refuse those federal funds, thus leaving tens of thousands of Texas women on the line.



RICK PERRY DECIDED TO REFUSE FEDERAL FUNDS, THUS LEAVING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TEXAS WOMEN ON THE LINE.

Gov. Perry promises to scrape together the funding for the program from state funds – but hasn't said where he'll find the money or how the program will continue to be effective if the clinics that serve 44 percent of its patients are cut off. Instead, the governor is trying to place the blame for the service cuts on the Obama administration, who he accuses of "political posturing" and putting "the interests of abortion providers and their affiliates, like Planned Parenthood, over the well-being of more than 100,000 low-income Texas women."

Tellingly, the move has not at all affected Texas abortion providers, who never received state or federal financing to begin with. (The Texas Planned Parenthood clinics that provide abortions are run as a separate financial entity from those that receive Women's Health Program funds, to comply with a state law that already prevents public funding for abortions.) Instead, it has solely served to make it more difficult for women to access affordable contraception, screenings and preventative care.

THIS BLUNT AMENDMENT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED EMPLOYERS WITH ANY STATED MORAL OBJECTION TO ANY PRACTICE, SUCH AS BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS, HIV/AIDS SCREENINGS, CANCER EXAMS AND VACCINATIONS, TO DENY THEIR EMPLOYEES COVERAGE FOR THOSE TREATMENTS.

At issue in the debate over government funding of Planned Parenthood is the politics of abortion. At stake are the lives of low-income women. The choice in Texas to prioritize far-right social politics over the health of low-income women is one that members of Congress and state legislators across the country have shown that they are willing to make.

In 2011, Republicans in Congress set out to do what Texas is doing on a national scale, by eliminating funding to Title X, the 40-year-old federal program dedicated to improving access to family planning assistance. Title X not only benefits women's health, but also helps the government save billions of dollars each year in Medicaid spending by reducing unintended pregnancies. In 2008, Title X was critical in supporting 4,500 clinics that served approximately five million women and men.

The Title X program was signed into law by President Richard Nixon and sponsored by then-Congressman George H. W. Bush. But for the modern Republican Party, shutting it down has become an ideological imperative.

In early 2011, the powerful Republican Study Committee unveiled a plan to completely eliminate funding for Title X. Republican leaders quickly embraced the plan, along with a plan to end funding to Planned Parenthood. Pro-corporate organizations including Americans for Tax Reform and Americans for Prosperity allied with Religious Right groups like the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America to demand Republicans defund Planned Parenthood and eliminate Title X.

These weren't idle threats. In February 2011, the House of Representatives, newly dominated by the Tea Party arm of the GOP, passed a budget that defunded Title X and cut all funding to Planned Parenthood. Faced with opposition from President Obama and the Senate,

House Republicans threatened to shut down the federal government if they didn't get their way in stopping clinics from providing contraceptives and preventative health screenings. Ultimately, facing mounting public backlash, they backed down.

But House Republicans didn't stop there. In early 2012, Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla, launched a congressional inquiry into Planned Parenthood based on a discredited "investigation" by the antichoice group Live Action. Rep. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee also asked Speaker John Boehner to hold formal hearings to investigate Planned Parenthood's use of federal dollars based on allegations by Religious Right organizations the Alliance Defense Fund and the Susan B. Anthony List.

While the Republicans' plan to end Planned Parenthood's financing was defeated in Congress, many

GOP-controlled state legislatures took up the strategy and voted to defund or partially defund Planned Parenthood in states including Indiana, Kansas, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas and Wisconsin. In addition, New Jersey Republican Governor Chris Christie vetoed the funding for Planned Parenthood that his state legislature had appropriated. Federal courts in Indiana, North Carolina and Kansas have blocked the funding cuts, while the federal government has pledged to [pay for the care](#) that would have been eliminated in New Hampshire. Tennessee's Planned Parenthood cuts are [under legal review](#). The services eliminated in [Wisconsin](#), [New Jersey](#), and Texas affect tens of thousands of women in each state.

Every major 2012 Republican presidential candidate has said that he or she would defund Planned Parenthood if elected. At the final GOP debate in Arizona, frontrunners [Mitt Romney](#) and [Rick Santorum](#) vied to appear as the staunchest opponent of financing Planned Parenthood and Title X -- even though both candidates had favored such funding in the past.

The concerted effort to shut down Planned Parenthood and women's health clinics throughout the nation was thrown into focus in January 2012, when the nonpartisan Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a prominent breast-cancer research group, abruptly announced that it would end its long-standing partnership with Planned Parenthood. Komen, which had for years funded Planned Parenthood's work providing breast cancer screenings and mammogram referrals to low-income women, apparently buckled under pressure from anti-choice activists both outside and within the organization.

The Komen controversy, however, ultimately ended up mobilizing public resistance to efforts to politicize women's health. Within two days of Komen announcing its decision, Planned Parenthood had received enough donations to cover the entire amount it would have received from a year of grants from the breast cancer organization. And the backlash against a formerly well-respected women's health organization joining the "culture wars" was so strong that Komen ultimately backed down and said it would consider restoring its ties to Planned Parenthood.

THE CONTRACEPTION COVERAGE DEBATE

Another struggle over access to contraception is centered on whether religiously affiliated organizations like hospitals and universities should be exempt from a provision in the Affordable Care Act that requires insurers to provide contraception coverage without copays. The Obama administration, at the recommendation of medical groups including the [Institute of Medicine](#) and the [American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#), issued a [rule](#) in January 2012 that insurance plans cover contraception at no cost to employees. After much public debate over the scope of an exception for insurance provided by religiously affiliated organizations, such as hospitals and universities, a compromise, endorsed by the Catholic Health Association, was reached under which religiously affiliated organizations would not have to pay for the contraception coverage. Instead, their female employees would be able to enter into agreements directly with [insurance companies, which would then be responsible](#) for covering the costs of contraception. Houses of worship were always exempt from the requirement. The policy has the support of Roman Catholic bodies including the [Catholic Health Association](#), the [Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities](#), and [Catholic Charities USA](#).

The Right has not taken kindly to the White House's effort to make affordable contraception available to all American women. Conservative talkers have compared Obama to [dictators and tyrants](#), [warning](#) that the administration's real goal is to eliminate freedom of religion. Chuck Colson dubbed the contraception coverage rule the "[greatest threat to America](#)," and one bishop called it a work "of the power of evil, the Devil," that must be "[violently opposed](#)." Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., chairman of the House Oversight Committee, even convened a hearing to [demand](#) that the government exempt all employers -- religiously affiliated or not -- from providing insurance coverage for any procedure to which they morally object. Notably, the key panel at the hearing included no female witnesses.

The Republican Party and Religious Right activists rallied behind an amendment proposed by Sen Roy Blunt, R-Mo., that would have allowed any employer to exempt themselves from covering any medical procedure they find morally objectionable. This amendment would



REPRESENTATIVE DARRELL ISSA CONVENE AN ALL-MALE HEARING DEMANDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXEMPT ALL EMPLOYERS – RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED OR NOT – FROM PROVIDING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ANY PROCEDURE TO WHICH THEY MORALLY OBJECT.

have had implications [far beyond just contraception](#) – its broad language would have allowed employers with any stated moral objection to any practice, such as blood transfusions, HIV/AIDS screenings, cancer exams and vaccinations, to deny their employees coverage for those treatments.

Republican presidential candidates have piled on. Mitt Romney dubbed the contraception mandate “[an assault on religion unlike anything we have seen](#)” and pledged

to [oppose access](#) to emergency contraception for rape victims. However, as governor of Massachusetts Romney had [kept a similar mandate](#) in place as he overhauled the state’s health-care system. Massachusetts is still [one of 20](#) states that have contraception coverage mandates that impact religiously affiliated institutions.

On the campaign trail in Ohio, Romney again switched his position on contraceptive coverage mandates —

twice. Asked by a reporter about his view on the Blunt Amendment, Romney [replied](#), “I’m not for the bill,” saying he didn’t want to get “into questions about contraception.” Later that same day, his campaign frantically reversed course, coming out in favor of the Blunt Amendment.

Presidential candidate Rick Santorum, a [longtime opponent of birth control](#), has expressed hope that the Supreme Court will [overturn Griswold v. Connecticut](#),

RICK SANTORUM HAS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE SUPREME COURT WILL RECRIMINALIZE BIRTH CONTROL.

thus allowing states to recriminalize contraception. He [told](#) extremist radio host Bryan Fischer that the contraception coverage mandate proves the president “believes he is more of an emperor than a president.”

Newt Gingrich joined the other candidates in attacking the Obama administration’s “[war on religion](#)” and accused the president of believing that he is “[superior](#)” to the Pope. Gingrich also [maintained](#) that Obama is

MEET THE FRONT-LINE SOLIDERS OF THE WAR

NEWT GINGRICH:

"YOU NOW GOT THIS SECULAR, ANTI-RELIGIOUS, LEFT-WING PARTY AND IT'S CONSOLIDATING IN ITS HOSTILITY TO RELIGION."

DELEGATE C. TODD GILBERT:

"In the vast majority of these cases, these [abortions] are matters of **lifestyle convenience.**"

"SO, MS. FLUKE AND THE REST OF YOU **FEMINAZIS**, HERE'S THE DEAL: IF WE ARE GOING TO PAY FOR YOUR CONTRACEPTIVES, WE WANT YOU TO POST THE VIDEOS ONLINE SO WE CAN ALL WATCH."

-RUSH LIMBAUGH

"OBAMA CITED FLUKE'S 'BRAVERY' WHEN HE SPOKE ABOUT HER. BUT A MORE APT WORD IS 'SHAMELESSNESS.'"

-GARY BAUER

BRYAN FISCHER:

"The real scandal here is that this woman could, without any trace of shame, without any trace of embarrassment, give open testimony before the entire United States of America about how much **promiscuous sex** she and her classmates are having."

"I THINK A LOT OF WOMEN A **SINGLE MOTHERHO** BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT WHICH IT IS ALMOST PREFER

-WISCONSIN SENATOR C

"I BELIEVE THIS IS A BAILOUT FOR PLANNED ...IT IS IDEOLOGICALLY AND POLITICALLY DRIP IT IS UNRELATED TO THE BASIC NEEDS OF HE

-REP. JEFF FORTENBERRY



QUOTES ON WOMEN FROM RIGHTWINGWATCH.ORG

"BACK IN MY DAY, THEY USED BAYER ASPIRIN FOR CONTRACEPTIVES. THE GALS PUT IT BETWEEN THEIR KNEES AND IT WASN'T THAT COSTLY."

-FOSTER FRIESS

"...RE ADOPTING THE MODERN LIFESTYLE... CREATES A SITUATION IN WHICH... ARE REQUIRED."

-GLENN GROTHMAN

"[Birth control is] not okay, because it's a license to do things in the sexual realm that is counter to how things are supposed to be."

-RICK SANTORUM

The contraception coverage mandate is "an **assault on religion** unlike anything we have seen."

-MITT ROMNEY

"...PARENTHOOD... EVEN BECAUSE... HEALTH CARE."

MATT BARBER:

"Can someone please explain to me how and why a woman's 'right' to be **promiscuous** is my financial responsibility?"



buttressing an “anti-Christian, anti-Jewish” ideology and that “he is attacking the Catholic Church.” Gingrich added that the Senate’s rejection of the Blunt Amendment shows “how sick we’ve become” as a country.

As in the Planned Parenthood and Title X debates, the GOP’s stance on contraception coverage is in conflict with the [majority of Americans and even most Catholics](#).

In reality, the Right’s “religious liberty” argument is a pretext for their real opposition to expanded contraception coverage – a view that reproductive rights are somehow separable from women’s health.

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Nev., sponsor of the House version of Blunt’s measure, called contraceptives



AN AMENDMENT PROPOSED BY MISSOURI SEN. ROY BLUNT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED ANY EMPLOYER TO EXEMPT THEMSELVES FROM COVERING ANY MEDICAL PROCEDURE THEY FIND MORALLY OBJECTIONABLE.

“[unrelated to the basic needs of health care](#),” even though [virtually all women](#) who have had sex have used a contraceptive method. Foster Friess, the multimillionaire financier of conservative causes and a pro-Santorum Super PAC, dismissed concerns about the cost of contraception, [telling MSNBC’s Andrea Mitchell](#), “Back in my day, they used Bayer aspirin for contraceptives. The gals put it between their knees and it wasn’t that costly.” Showing almost as much cluelessness as Friess, Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. later told a reporter that women seeking affordable birth control could just Google “What if I can’t afford birth control?”

The real motivations behind the right-wing response to the contraception mandate were further amplified when Issa [prohibited](#) female Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke from testifying on his all-male panel on the policy. Fluke, a member of Students for Reproductive Justice, later spoke at a hearing convened by Democrats. She [testified](#) that students could spend upward of \$3,000 a year over the course of law school on contraception, which she noted is used not only to prevent unintended pregnancies but also to deal with health problems such as ovarian cysts, hormonal disorders and early menopause.

Immediately, Rush Limbaugh and other conservative commentators twisted Fluke’s words to claim that she was asking for taxpayer dollars to finance contraception coverage and implied – with varying levels of insult – that she was having promiscuous sex. Limbaugh called her a “slut” and a “prostitute,” said she had “boyfriends...[lined up around the block](#),” and speculated she was “[having so much sex, it’s amazing she can still walk](#).” He went after her fellow students as well, saying Fluke and other women at Georgetown should compete for the “[Wilt Chamberlain scholarship](#).”

“So, Ms. Fluke and the rest of you feminazis, here’s the deal: If we are going to pay for your contraceptives,” Limbaugh said, “we want you to post the videos online so we can all watch.”

Other conservatives piled on. “Let me get this straight, Ms. Fluke,” Bill O’Reilly of Fox News [said](#). “You want me to give you my hard-earned money so you can have sex?” Like Limbaugh and O’Reilly, Sean Hannity also repeated the falsehood that Fluke was asking for taxpayer funding of contraceptives for Georgetown students, [saying](#), “For crying out loud, why is the taxpayer bearing

the cost of the sex life of students at Georgetown University law school?”

The Religious Right was equally venomous and deceitful. Televangelist Pat Robertson attacked Fluke for her “fornication,” and American Family Association spokesman Bryan Fischer said that Rush Limbaugh was “right” to call Fluke a “slut,” saying she went “on national TV and admits she’s sleeping with so many guys she can’t keep track [and] doing it three times a day.”

Of course, the right-wing so-called “pro-family” and “decency” groups, including conservative women groups, were silent on Limbaugh’s obscene attacks.

The leading Republican presidential candidates weren’t eager to rebuke Limbaugh for his false and insulting remarks. Romney said Limbaugh’s “weren’t the words I would have used.” Santorum justified Limbaugh’s words, saying, “An entertainer can be absurd...He’s in a very different business than I am.”

INTENSIFYING ATTACKS ON CHOICE

Massive Republican victories in the 2010 midterm elections gave the GOP control of the U.S. House and state legislative bodies across the country. Although Republicans, bolstered by the ultra-conservative Tea Party movement, campaigned on pledges to create jobs and improve the economy, social issues have played a dominant role in the past two years of Republican governance.

The Guttmacher Institute found that 92 new provisions restricting access to reproductive health care were

“YOU WANT ME TO GIVE YOU MY HARD-EARNED MONEY SO YOU CAN HAVE SEX?” — BILL O’REILLY

enacted by state legislatures in 2011, four times the number of restrictions enacted the previous year. The antichoice group Americans United for Life tried to take credit for the trend, claiming that many of the measures were based on its model legislation for state lawmakers. The group described its work as “very much a military strategy...what we do is very much under the radar screen.” These new state-level restrictions on choice are wide-ranging. South Dakota tried to require women seeking abortions to first visit so-called “crisis pregnancy

centers.” Crisis pregnancy centers are staffed not by medical professionals, but by antichoice activists trained to harangue women into changing their minds about abortion. A 2006 congressional report found that these centers give women “false and misleading” and “grossly inaccurate or distorted” information about abortion procedures. While a federal judge has blocked South Dakota’s law from taking effect, Indiana passed a law requiring doctors to give women false information about abortion procedures, such as the widely discredited claim that abortion is linked to increases in cancer. The Arizona Senate even passed a law allowing doctors to withhold medical information from women if they think that information could lead them to choose an abortion. Kansas is considering a similar law, and nine other states have them on the books.

While some states are passing laws that make it legal to withhold medical information from women or feed them inaccurate information such as the debunked abortion—cancer link, others are requiring doctors to perform medically unnecessary ultrasounds on women seeking abortions and show or offer to show the image to the patient. In February, Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell became the center of a national outcry when he said he’d sign a bill passed by the state legislature requiring that most women seeking abortions first undergo an invasive transvaginal ultrasound without their consent – a requirement that some pointed out met the state’s definition of sexual assault. McDonnell quickly backtracked and signed a bill that doesn’t require transvaginal ultrasounds but does require abdominal ultrasounds whether or not they are medically necessary.

Texas passed a transvaginal ultrasound bill similar to Virginia’s earlier this year, and Iowa is considering the

measure. An Alabama lawmaker who had written a similar bill backed down on the transvaginal requirement after the controversy erupted in Virginia. North Carolina’s and Oklahoma’s laws requiring unnecessary ultrasounds have been blocked by federal courts. Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana and Mississippi currently have mandatory ultrasound laws on the books.

Many new antichoice restrictions come without exceptions for cases of rape and incest, which one Indiana Republican lawmaker defended by claiming that women will try to fabricate claims and “simply say that they’ve been raped or there’s incest.”

Another attack on choice comes in the form of extremist “personhood” measures, which declare that fertilized eggs have full legal rights from the moment of conception. These measures would ban abortion in all cases, along with common forms of birth control. A Personhood initiative failed in Mississippi in 2011 after tremendous opposition in that conservative state,

by imposing unnecessary and burdensome regulations on physicians who perform abortion services. Such TRAP laws have closed all but one abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi, making it extremely difficult for women in the state to exercise their right to have a legal medical procedure. Now, new legislation that has been approved by the state legislature is threatening to close the state’s last abortion clinic – making it the first state in the country in which women would not have access to safe and legal abortion. The state’s Republican lieutenant governor, Tate Reeves, boasted that the TRAP bill would “effectively close the only abortion clinic in Mississippi” by preventing the clinic from relying on

MANY NEW ANTICHOICE RESTRICTIONS COME WITHOUT EXCEPTIONS FOR CASES OF RAPE AND INCEST

but activists have pursued similar laws in Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Ohio and Oklahoma. After badly failing at the ballot box, Mississippi lawmakers are now seeking to implement the Personhood law through the legislature.

The growth of the radical Personhood movement, which was once rejected by major antichoice groups like the National Right to Life Committee and Eagle Forum, has also impacted the presidential race: Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich have signed a Personhood USA pledge, and Mitt Romney announced his support for Personhood legislation while speaking with Mike Huckabee, who has keynoted fundraisers for Personhood USA.

Taking attacks on women’s health to a new level, Republicans in the Kansas state legislature may force the state’s flagship medical program to lose its accreditation as result of a bill that prohibits state employees, including medical residents at the University of Kansas, from participating in abortion services. To receive accreditation in obstetrics and gynecology, universities must offer students an opportunity to train in and learn about abortion services, although they are not required to partake in the training. While the University of Kansas does not perform abortions at the medical center, it could lose its accreditation if the bill becomes law.

For years the antichoice movement has used TRAP laws, or targeted regulations of abortion providers, to close clinics that provide abortion services across the country

out-of-state physicians. The clinic, the Jackson Women’s Health Organization, depends on out-of-state physicians because many doctors who live in Mississippi face constant harassment and threats of violence. Gov. Phil Bryan, a Republican and strong supporter of the state’s failed “personhood” initiative, is likely to sign the bill, and with it threaten potential closure of the last clinic where Mississippi women can access abortion services.

On the federal level, House Republicans are currently considering two extreme antichoice bills — despite their promise to solely focus on “jobs, jobs, jobs.” Rep. Trent Franks, R-AZ, proposed the PRENDA bill, which he claims will stop abortion providers’ supposed genocide of females and racial minorities by imposing criminal penalties on race-based and gender-based abortions. In an interview with a group supportive of his bill, Franks admitted that his legislation – which has been passed by the House Judiciary Committee—is part of a “much bigger agenda” to recriminalize abortion. Another bill being considered in the House would make it illegal for someone to assist a minor in seeking an abortion in another state if they do not notify her parent or guardian, which would not only federalize state abortion laws but also make it more difficult for women in dangerous situations, such as victims of parental rape, to seek legal abortions.

The spike in state and federal antichoice legislation shows the proliferation of attempts to enshrine a demeaning view of women into the law and criminalize a legal and potentially lifesaving medical procedure.

STOPPING THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

In one of the most egregious recent instances of the Right prioritizing “culture war” dogma over the lives of women, Senate Republicans are trying to stop a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) because it contains protections for LGBT people and undocumented immigrants.

While the 1994 law has been easily reauthorized twice, in 2000 and 2005, Senate Republicans objected to new provisions in the 2012 reauthorization meant to help undocumented immigrants leave abusive relationships and prevent organizations receiving grants under the act from discriminating against LGBT people. Every Republican on the Judiciary Committee voted against approving the bill, to the great delight of Religious Right activists who have opposed VAWA from its inception.

Janice Crouse, of Concerned Women for America, claimed that the program, which grants communities funds for combating domestic violence, merely funds “reeducating programs for judges to try to train them in the principles of feminism and so-called ‘women’s rights’” and that the new provisions would merely be a



REP. TRENT FRANKS (R-AZ) ADMITTED THAT HIS LEGISLATION IS PART OF A “MUCH BIGGER AGENDA” TO RECRIMINALIZE ABORTION.

tool for women seeking green-card marriages.

The Eagle Forum’s Phyllis Schlafly – who has famously insisted that spousal rape does not exist – said that VAWA was merely a feminist plot to “punish men.” She alleged that VAWA was President Clinton’s “payoff to the feminists for supporting his election as President” and that it funds “radical feminist organizations without any accountability.”

SCAPEGOATING SINGLE MOTHERS AND WORKING WOMEN

Wisconsin state senator Glenn Grothman last month introduced a bill that would require that the state’s Child Abuse and Protection Board label single parents as a major factor contributing to “child abuse and neglect” – a slap in the face to the state’s single parents, who are raising roughly a third of children in the state. Later explaining his bill on the Alan Colmes program, he charged that the growing rate of single parenthood in the country is the “choice of the women,” who “are adopting the single motherhood lifestyle because the government creates a situation in which it is almost preferred.”

The bill’s cosponsor, Rep. Don Pridemore, later suggested that women in abusive relationships shouldn’t divorce, but “refind those reasons and get back to why they got married in the first place.”

Eagle Forum, the antifeminist group run by Phyllis Schlafly, agreed with Grothman, writing, “Single motherhood is the biggest cause of social ills today, and harms kids more than anything else. And it could be reduced if the govt would stop subsidizing it and if our culture would stop encouraging it.”

The scapegoating of single mothers, which Sen. Grothman is trying to write into law, has long been a theme embraced by former Pennsylvania senator and GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum. During his Senate race in 1994, Santorum accused single mothers of “breeding criminals” and causing “the fabric of this country [to] fall apart” and even went so far as to demand that single mothers seeking welfare first identify the father of the child to the government. He hasn’t softened his rhetoric much since. In October 2011 he said that the Democratic Party’s power comes from single mothers with “a desire for government.” In a GOP

debate, he accused single mothers of refusing to marry their boyfriends in order to continue collecting welfare.

The tried-and-true right-wing attacks on mythical “welfare queens” have a new meaning in an era when Republican politicians are desperately trying to roll back access to contraception. A cynical economic

“YOU COULD ARGUE THAT MONEY IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR MEN.” - WISCONSIN SEN. GLENN GROTHMAN

scapegoating strategy has become inextricably tied up with Religious Right attacks on women’s autonomy.

The Right’s resistance to women’s changing roles was thrown into focus when, in February 2012, the Pentagon formally allowed women to serve in front-line positions in military conflicts. The rule change allowed official recognition of the many women servicemembers who had already been serving in these dangerous positions. Many on the Right, however, were displeased. Rick Santorum charged that the change could create a “compromising situation” because of “emotions” – he later attempted to clarify that the emotions he was referring to were the protective “instincts” of men. In a December 2011 survey, Santorum, Gingrich, Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann all said they would oppose allowing women to serve in combat positions.

FIGHTING EQUAL PAY LAWS

In his first month in office, President Obama signed into law the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. The Ledbetter Act responded to the Supreme Court’s ruling that Lilly Ledbetter, a supervisor at a Goodyear Tire plant, couldn’t sue her employer for two decades of pay discrimination because, they said, the 180-day window to file her discrimination claim began when her employers set her salary illegally, rather than each time she got a paycheck — meaning that by the time she discovered the pay discrimination she was out of luck. The Ledbetter Act tweaked federal equal pay law to make it clear that the statute of limitations clock started each time a woman received a discriminatory paycheck. It was opposed by powerful corporate groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and by the majority of Republicans in the House and Senate. But the passage of the Ledbetter Act didn’t end right-wing attacks on equal pay laws. It only made them more

aggressive in overturning them. Most states have laws that create easier and less-costly state-level channels for confronting pay discrimination. One such law, passed in Wisconsin in 2009, was just repealed in April 2012 by the Republican-controlled Wisconsin state legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Scott Walker.

Explaining the decision, Wisconsin Sen. Glenn Grothman said, “You could argue that money is more important for men. I think a guy in their first job, maybe because they expect to be a breadwinner someday, may be a little more money-conscious. To attribute everything to a so-called bias in the workplace is just not true.”

Women in Wisconsin still make only 75 cents to every dollar made by men. Nationally, women make 77 cents to the dollar.

CONCLUSION

Since the rise of the Tea Party movement, the Right has found stunning success in its attempts to turn back decades of gains in the rights and status of women. The efforts to turn back the clock on American women focus on reproductive rights but also attack the changing roles in the workplace, in the family and in government that reproductive rights have helped to allow women to assume.

Anti-woman proposals that have been percolating in the right-wing fringe for years – such as “personhood” measures – are suddenly supported by mainstream presidential candidates. Rights that women have come to take for granted – like the right to access birth control – have suddenly come under attack for the first time in decades.

These renewed attacks on women are unacceptable – and they can be stopped. As the impassioned response to the Susan G. Komen/Planned Parenthood controversy showed, American women aren’t ready to see their hard-won rights slip away, and they aren’t willing to be painted as scapegoats for the nation’s problems.

THE WAR ON WOMEN: HOW YOU CAN FIGHT BACK

- ✓ **CALL AND WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATORS. CALLS, LETTERS AND EMAILS REALLY DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO ELECTED OFFICIALS. LET YOUR SENATORS, CONGRESSPEOPLE, GOVERNOR AND STATE LEGISLATORS KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT ATTACKS ON WOMEN. AND WHEN THEY STAND UP FOR WOMEN IN YOUR STATE, CALL OR WRITE TO THANK THEM!**
- ✓ **SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR. A CAREFULLY CRAFTED LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE WAR ON WOMEN. THE MORE VOICES WE HAVE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST RIGHT-WING ATTACKS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THE STRONGER WE CAN BE.**
- ✓ **CALL IN TO TALK RADIO SHOWS. TALK RADIO SHOWS CAN BE A GREAT VENUE FOR PROGRESSIVE VOICES TO COUNTER ANTI-WOMEN RHETORIC. BY CALLING IN ARMED WITH FACTS AND YOUR OWN STORY, YOU CAN HELP TO DISPEL MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES AND HELP TO SPREAD THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HARM DONE BY THE WAR ON WOMEN.**
- ✓ **TELL FRIENDS ABOUT THE ISSUE AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO SPEAK UP. USE FACEBOOK, TWITTER, EMAIL AND WORD OF MOUTH TO MAKE SURE YOUR FRIENDS KNOW ABOUT ATTACKS IN YOUR STATE AND IN WASHINGTON ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO SPEAK UP TOO.**
- ✓ **TELL YOUR OWN STORY. EVERY LAW THAT'S PASSED MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF REAL PEOPLE. SPEAK UP ABOUT HOW THE WAR ON WOMEN AFFECTS YOU – AND MAKE SURE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS HEAR YOUR STORY.**
- ✓ **VOTE!**



“SO, MS. FLUKE AND THE REST OF YOU FEMINAZIS, HERE’S THE DEAL: IF WE ARE GOING TO PAY FOR YOUR CONTRACEPTIVES, WE WANT YOU TO POST THE VIDEOS ONLINE SO WE CAN ALL WATCH.” –RUSH LIMBAUGH

**“IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THESE CASES, THESE [ABORTIONS] ARE MATTERS OF LIFESTYLE CONVENIENCE.”
–DELEGATE C. TODD GILBERT**



“CAN SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN TO ME HOW AND WHY A WOMAN’S ‘RIGHT’ TO BE PROMISCUOUS IS MY FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?” –MATT BARBER

“YOU COULD ARGUE THAT MONEY IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR MEN.” –GLENN GROTHMAN



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