



Monday *MONITOR*

Monday, February 11, 2008

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HB1339 ABORTION PROVIDERS & HOSPITALS SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL DISCRIMINATION

HB1339—Muschany (R-87) was heard Tuesday in House Judiciary. This bill clearly discriminates against doctors and hospitals that provide abortion care as it violates the equal protection rights of abortion providers, by excluding them from tort protections that are available for all other medical services in the state or Missouri. This bill also imposes an unconstitutional condition on abortion providers by conditioning their access to a generally-available benefit (tort reform protections) on giving up constitutionally-protected activity (providing services to women who want to exercise their constitutional right to an abortion). It is unfair to single out doctors and hospitals because they provide safe abortion care and deny them tort protections when there are no legitimate medical or legal reasons for doing so. The sponsor intentionally and incorrectly stated that the majority of abortions are performed on teens. In fact, women of all ages and in all family situations seek abortion care. Rep. Muschany's statement was emotional and political, but wrong. Campaign Life MO continued to spread medical inaccuracies by repeating the discredited statement that abortion causes breast cancer, a long-time myth dispelled by every credible cancer fighting institution. The witness for the Catholic Conference was more honest and direct: "this bill provides a disincentive to provide abortion in Missouri."

IN MISSOURI, BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU...

Therese Sander (R-22) filed **HB1984** – an exact copy of HB1922 filed by her Democrat colleague, Belinda Harris (D-110). Like HB1922, this bill requires abortion providers to report to the state information it has already been reporting for years. In addition, however, it also requires physicians to **ask women why they are seeking an abortion—and report that to the state**. This is a provision long sought by anti-abortion activists who have no intention of using the information to help reduce unintended pregnancy—the major reason why women obtain abortions—but rather to find more obstacles to place in the path of women who are clearly thought unable to make these private decisions for themselves. *Reminder*: last week we reported the following statement made by President George W. Bush: "We will help ensure that decisions about your medical care are made in the privacy of your doctor's office—not in the halls of Congress." He forgot to say "except in Missouri." Perhaps it is no accident this bill was assigned the Orwellian 'big brother' number 1984...

PLEASE SIGN ON TO THE 2008 PREVENTION FIRST ACT, TODAY!

Planned Parenthood advocates from across the state will be in Jefferson City on Tuesday, February 12th to talk with legislators about co-sponsoring the 2008 Prevention First Act. This bill will be simultaneously introduced by Senator Joan Bray and Representative Robin Wright-Jones later this month. In statewide polling last September by Peter D. Hart and Associates, Missouri voters again overwhelmingly demonstrated their support for prevention over more restrictions to reproductive health care. In fact, by 23 percentage points, voters say a legislator who advocates "prevention first" focusing on "reducing unintended pregnancies by providing comprehensive sex education and increasing access to contraception and other family planning services" has the best approach (59%), compared with a legislator who advocates placing additional restrictions on abortion (36%). Voters overwhelmingly express a preference for comprehensive sex education in our schools—76% strongly agree; believe that pharmacies dispense OTC and Rx medications, including birth control, without discrimination or delay—65% strongly agree; and strongly agree (63%) the government should not interfere with private health care decisions made between a patient and her doctor (see George Bush quote, above). For more information about the poll results, go to: www.ppmissouri.org

Lobby for Women's Health and Lives

Tuesday, March 4, 2008—Jefferson City

BUSH. BLUNT. BOTH BAD FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Between Governor Matt Blunt's "mission accomplished" and President Bush's proposed, backward budget, both men have succeeded in putting politics over women's health.

For three years, Governor Blunt has refused to fund the highly successful state Family Planning Program, encouraged dangerous abstinence-only programs in schools, deliberately tried to confuse contraception and abortion in the minds of Missourians, and tossed 100,000 Missourians off Medicaid—the majority women and children. President Bush, meanwhile, is proposing devastating cuts to funding for Medicaid family planning, which provides access to contraception and other family planning services to low-income women; failing to appropriately fund Title X, America's family planning program; and increasing funding for ineffective abstinence-only programs.

These politicians have it backwards. Both are increasing support for programs that don't work, and decreasing support for programs that are proven effective.

The best way to prevent unintended pregnancies and promote healthy families is to invest in state and Federal family planning programs, and ensure more women and families have access to affordable, quality reproductive health care—especially comprehensive sex education programs for teens. Instead, the president's budget increases funds for dangerous abstinence-only programs that don't work, and cuts funding for Medicaid family planning that helps reduce unintended pregnancies.

In addition, our governor has succeeded in diverting family planning funds to 'alternatives to abortion' programs (that may not talk about birth control) while promoting dangerous abstinence only programs.

The president's 2009 budget proposes cutting Medicaid funding for family planning by \$3.3 billion over five years. (Yes, billion...) This would have a devastating effect on the millions of low-income women who rely on Medicaid for contraception and other preventive family planning services. The president's drastic proposal would do nothing more than increase the number of unintended pregnancies and the rate of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. In addition, the president's 2009 budget proposes to flat-fund America's family planning program, despite the fact that Title X is already drastically under-funded.

Yet the president proposes increasing funding for Community-Based Abstinence Education by \$27.7 million, a 24 percent increase. A recent congressional study on abstinence-only programs found they had no measurable impact on increasing abstinence or delaying sexual initiation among participating youth. And, for the first time in 14 years, the teen birth rate has risen.

President Bush and Governor Blunt are putting politics over the health and welfare of our teens. The public has rejected abstinence-only (a mere 6% of Missourians support it); 16 governors have rejected funding for abstinence-only (Missouri is not one); and just last year Congress rejected additional funding for it. Parents want to see commonsense sex education programs that provide our teens with the information they need to stay safe and healthy.

As *The New York Times* stated last month, "Prevention works." The *Times* editorial said the best way to reduce the need for abortion is to "focus on helping women avoid unwanted pregnancies." Sadly, this president's budget—and our governor's policies—are backwards, put politics over women's health, and do not invest in commonsense prevention programs that work.