



Monday *MONITOR*

Monday, February 16, 2009

Contact: Michelle Trupiano – 573.424.8717 (cell)

WHILE ROME BURNS, ANTI-CHOICE POLITICIANS IN JEFFERSON CITY FIDDLE...

With the national and state economies in crisis, unemployment and lack of health insurance on the rise, and families concerned about whether they can put food on their tables, anti-choice/anti-family planning Missouri legislators wasted two legislative days last week debating a non-binding resolution opposing a bill that has not been filed in Congress that does nothing to tackle unintended pregnancies.

Rep. Beth Low (D-Kansas City) was clear: “Mr. Speaker, HR 294 [*editors note: the anti-Freedom of Choice Act resolution*] doesn’t purport to prevent further abortions. It doesn’t purport to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies. In fact, it doesn’t even deal with a bill that is currently filed in Congress. I am left wondering, Mr. Speaker, just what this Resolution **does** attempt to accomplish. Does House Resolution 294 attempt to fix our failing healthcare system or create high quality jobs for hardworking Missourians? Does House Resolution 294 attempt to help our cherished children succeed by improving our public schools? Nope. House Resolution 294 only really succeeds at one thing; changing the debate back to a wedge issue, rather than the myriad crises facing our state and nation.”

Rep. Low concluded: “Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the people of our state who need us to tackle real problems right now, I respectfully suggest we stop wasting time on this resolution.” Special thanks also to Reps. **Kelly, Colona, Schupp, Webb, LeVota, McNeil, and Meiners** for speaking against the time-wasting, non-problem-solving resolution. And shame on Reps. **Dixon, Bandom, Allen, Zerr, Diehl, Schieffer, Sanders, Grisamore, Ruestman, Gatschenberger, Harris (110), Fisher, Stevenson, Kuessner, Riddle, and Davis** for stretching out this political homage to the Missouri Right to Life for TWO legislative days.

STILL TIME FOR THOSE WHO VOTED FOR ANTI-FOCA RESOLUTION TO CO-SPONSOR PFA.

Now that the anti-abortion posturing for the Missouri Right to Life is done, those Representatives who voted for HR 294 & 212 are encouraged to co-sponsor a bill that would actually reduce abortion by tackling the much thornier issue of unintended pregnancies. Rep. Low is still taking names of co-sponsors for the 2009 Missouri Prevention First Act. Please contact her office at 573.751.4485.

HOUSE CHILDREN & FAMILIES COMMITTEE DEVOTES SECOND HEARING TO ABORTION

Rep. Cynthia Davis’ Committee on Children and Families—tasked with considering bills related to “the health, well-being and security of Missouri’s youth, children and families” has met twice this session. For the second time, the hearing focused only on abortion. **HB46** (Davis) and **HB434** (Pratt) were heard together. Six women, each of whom had chosen to have an abortion 20-30 years earlier, testified for the bill; one woman went so far as to say that her mother, who had supported her in her decision, should have been arrested for her support of that decision. Rep. Davis continues to refer to bogus statistics from a non-scientific study by the Eliot Institute to support her contention that the majority of women are ‘coerced’ to have abortions. At the same time, the definition of coercion in her bill is so broad as to include virtually any woman in a difficult situation. Testifying against the bill for the sexual assault community—that deals every day with incidents of real coercion—Colleen Coble criticized the bill for rendering a woman unable to make any decision for herself. The committee may vote on the bill as early as next Wednesday morning; **members should vote NO.**

NIH HOSTING CONFERENCE TO DETERMINE PRIORITIES FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH RESEARCH

The National Institutes for Health is holding the first of four regional conferences to identify priorities for women’s health research at Washington University in St. Louis from March 4th through 6th. Health, research, and advocacy organizations and individuals are encouraged to register (**by February 20th**) for this free conference and, if interested, to submit testimony for a public panel on the opening day. For more information and to register, go to: <http://www.orwhmeetings.com/newdirections/>

WACKINESS PICKING UP IN JEFF CITY

By Barb Shelly, Kansas City Star editorial page columnist, February 10

Just when you thought it was safe to drink the water inside the Missouri Capitol...

Sen. Scott Rupp, a Republican from Wentzville, accused Gov. Jay Nixon of using "henchmen" and a "goonsquad" when pushing for the confirmation of his economic development secretary, Linda Martinez. In some parts that's called persuasion, Senator.

and...

A Republican House member, Bryan Stevenson of Webb City, said during debate that a federal abortion proposal would be the "greatest power grab by the federal government since the War of Northern Aggression." In most parts that's known as the Civil War.

Stevenson apologized after other lawmakers objected. But both remarks are a signal that over-the-top rhetoric didn't go away when the new era of cooperation supposedly washed in to Jefferson City.

NATIONAL CONDOM WEEK: FEBRUARY 14—21

Saturday marked the beginning of National Condom Week. Condoms used consistently and correctly provide the best protection against sexually transmitted infections for sexually active women and men. They also protect against unintended pregnancy. Research shows that every year there are more than three million unintended pregnancies, and approximately 19 million women and men will contract a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

The 2007 report on STIs by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found the heaviest burden was among women—particularly young women—who also suffer the greatest health consequences of untreated STIs, including infertility. Biological factors place women at greater risk of infection than men, contributing to more severe health consequences for women. The report found:

- Missouri ranks among the top 15 states for sexually transmitted diseases.
- St. Louis rates first in the nation for gonorrhea and Chlamydia, and fifth for syphilis and HIV infections.
- Women represent the majority of reported Chlamydia and gonorrhea cases.
- One in four teenage girls (14 to 19) has an STD with rates as high as one out of every two African American teenage girls

In 2007, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBSS) included a national school-based survey conducted by the CDC, 44 state surveys, five territory surveys and 22 local surveys conducted among students in grades nine–12 between January 2007 and February 2008. It found:

- 47.8 percent of high school students had ever had sexual intercourse
- 14.9 percent of high school students had had sex with four or more people in their life
- 35 percent of high school students are currently sexually active

And, the teen birthrate is on the rise. Missouri's teen birth rate went up 6% in 2006 compared to a national average increase of 4%.

It is time we provide commonsense solutions to preventable health care problems. Women, men and teens need to know how to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections. With an estimated 750,000 teenage girls becoming pregnant in the US this year and nearly four million teens contracting a sexually transmitted infection, it is time to reject policies that aren't working and embrace those that help teens make responsible decisions about protecting their health and avoiding unintended pregnancies.

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats07>

YRBSS: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/CategoryQuestions.asp?Cat=4&desc=Sexual%20Behaviors>

Guttmacher Institute: <http://www.guttmacher.org>