

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Planned Parenthood Federation of America,
Planned Parenthood Missouri, and
Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

DATE: September 28, 2007

RE: Research Findings

On behalf of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri, from September 5 to 10, 2007, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., conducted a survey among 1,007 registered voters in the state of Missouri, including oversamples of 150 residents of Greene County, 150 residents of St. Charles County, 100 African Americans, and 100 voters under age 30. The margin of error for the sample is ± 3.09 percentage points.

Overview Of Key Findings

The findings from this research reveal that Missouri voters are dissatisfied with the current direction of reproductive health policy in the state and that this frustration is strongly tied to the need for more education and greater resources about reproductive health decisions, rather than about the availability of abortion (#1). Further, a majority of Missouri voters want to see Roe versus Wade upheld and show no consensus or momentum behind placing additional restrictions on abortion (#2). In fact, voters overwhelmingly favor an approach that emphasizes "prevention first" instead of placing additional restrictions on abortion (#3).

In addition, voters strongly support a wide range of proactive policy initiatives led by near-universal support for comprehensive sex education in public schools, but also including issues such as combating pharmacy refusal and restoring state funding for family planning services for uninsured women (#4).

Key Findings

1 Missouri voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the state when it comes to matters of reproductive health, such as comprehensive sex education, contraception, unintended pregnancy, and abortion. Importantly, this frustration does not revolve primarily around the availability of abortion and instead encompasses issues that are more salient to voters, including more education and information, better resources and support, and privacy protections.

- By 38% to 33%, Missouri voters are more likely to say the state is headed off on the wrong track rather than in the right direction when it comes to dealing with issues such as sex education, contraception, unintended pregnancy, and abortion, while an additional 29% feel mixed or unsure.
- Voters' dissatisfaction with Missouri's approach to reproductive health is not driven primarily by the availability of or access to abortion. Instead, several other issues are far more salient and relevant concerns for voters, specifically young people not having enough information and guidance to make responsible decisions about their own sexual behavior (28%), too many unintended pregnancies, especially among teens (26%), and government being too quick to interfere with people's private decisions (22%). By contrast, only 11% of voters say the biggest problem in the area of reproductive health is that abortion is too easily available. Notably, even among a broad range of constituencies including Republicans, Catholics, evangelicals, rural voters, and voters who feel Roe should be overturned, the availability of abortion is not the primary concern.

2 Support for upholding Roe versus Wade is a mainstream position among Missouri voters who also do not express consensus for or momentum behind the need for additional restrictions on abortion in the state.

- Voters are divided regarding the need for additional restrictions on abortion in Missouri. Half (49%) of voters think the existing restrictions that Missouri places on abortion are either about right (31%) or that fewer restrictions are needed (18%). Two in five (39%) think more restrictions are needed.
- A majority (55%) of Missouri voters want to see Roe versus Wade upheld, with the greatest intensity (44%) behind voters who describe themselves as feeling strongly about upholding Roe.

3 Overwhelmingly, voters favor a "prevention first" approach over an approach that emphasizes placing additional restrictions on abortion.

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%).

- Importantly, this "prevention first" message resonates strongly across the state but also has real appeal with key voter audiences, including voters under age 30 (who favor "prevention first" by 61% to 33%), rural voters (favor "prevention first" 54% to 41%) and "reachable voters" (favor

“prevention first” 64% to 35%), whose marginal preference actually outpaces voters overall.¹

4 A wide range of pro-family planning and pro-reproductive rights policy initiatives enjoy overwhelming support across Missouri and includes sweeping support for teaching comprehensive sex education in public schools, combating “pharmacy refusal” legislation, and restoring state funding for family planning services among other policy efforts.

- **Comprehensive Sex Education:** Voters overwhelmingly express a preference for comprehensive sex education² in Missouri’s schools, with 83% maintaining that public schools should teach it. By comparison, just 6% of voters believe state public schools should teach abstinence only. This nearly 14 to one marginal support for comprehensive sex education over abstinence only relegates abstinence only to a peripheral and even fringe position in the dialogue about the best and most appropriate approach to dealing with this issue. A majority of voters in nearly every demographic category, including Democrats, Republicans, and independents, as well as Catholics and evangelical Christians, support comprehensive sex education. Even voters who believe abortion should be illegal and those who believe Roe should be overturned support comprehensive sex education by a large margin.
- **Pharmacy Refusal:** Opposition to “pharmacy refusal” legislation also is consistently strong throughout Missouri—73% of voters say that pharmacists should not be allowed to refuse to fill prescriptions or to sell over-the-counter contraceptive products based on moral or religious objections, including majorities of nearly every voter demographic such as Catholics (81%), evangelical Christians (61%), and Republicans (58%). Even a majority of voters who favor more state restrictions on abortion (57%) oppose this proposal.
- **State Funding For Family Planning Services:** More than two-thirds (69%) of Missouri voters support restoring state funding for family planning services for uninsured women—with 60% saying they feel *strongly* that funding should be restored. Three in four (74%) Catholics, 54% of evangelical Christians, and even a 47% plurality of Republicans support restoring the funding (37% of Republicans oppose restoring

¹ Note that the term “reachable voters” is used to denote “conflicted” voters who are often described as the “middle” or “center” of the dialogue about abortion; in this analysis, these voters say that abortion should be legal only in the most extreme cases such as to save the life of the mother or in cases of rape and incest, but who also say they do not want to see Roe versus Wade overturned.

² Comprehensive sex education is defined as “information about abstinence as well as age-appropriate information about the risks and benefits of contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and AIDS.”

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funding and 16% are unsure). In both St. Charles and Greene Counties, 62% of voters support restoring the funding.

- **Planned Parenthood Contract:** Missouri voters do not support Governor Blunt's recent decision to terminate a 19-year contract with certain Planned Parenthood clinics that provide cancer screening to uninsured women because of Planned Parenthood's support for legal abortion. Three in five (60%) Missouri voters disagree with this action by the Governor—half (49%) strongly. Majorities in both St. Charles County (63%) and Greene County (57%) oppose the Governor's termination of the contract, as do 57% of all small town and rural voters across the state. Nearly three in four "reachable voters" (70%) disagree with the Governor's decision to drop the contract.
- **Banning Select Materials/Health Educators From Public Schools:** Further demonstrating strong opposition to state government placing limits on information about reproductive health care, 68% of Missouri voters say they oppose legislation recently enacted by the legislature to ban from public schools any informational materials or classroom visits from health professionals if they are connected to an organization that refers women for abortions, which would affect most hospitals and health clinics in the state. A majority of nearly every demographic subgroup of voters opposes this ban, including "reachable voters" (74%), Catholics (72%), voters from small town and rural communities (64%), evangelical Christians (56%), Republicans (54%), and even voters who would like to see Roe versus Wade overturned (51%).
- **Change The Definition Of "Ambulatory Surgical Center:"** A 51% majority of Missouri voters say they oppose the recently passed law requiring health clinics that perform five or more first-trimester abortions per month (including non-surgical abortions) to meet the standards applied to ambulatory surgical centers.
- **Additional Proactive Policy Initiatives:** Voters strongly support a broad array of other proactive policy initiatives on issues related to reproductive health. In fact, well over half of all voters strongly support each of the policy initiatives below, and with one exception, support for every policy initiative is as strong or even stronger among "reachable voters" than among voters overall. *The data consistently demonstrate that a proactive policy dialogue with these voters is especially critical for policymakers to initiate in seeking to connect with this important constituency.*

Proactive Policy Solutions
 Proportions who **STRONGLY** favor each proposal

	<u>All Voters</u> %	<u>Reachable Voters*</u> %
Require all public schools that choose to teach sex education to teach comprehensive sex education, which includes information about contraception, abstinence, and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS	76	76
Require all pharmacies to dispense over-the-counter and prescription contraception to patients without discrimination or delay	65	68
Require hospital emergency rooms to inform sexual-assault survivors of the availability of FDA-approved emergency contraception, also known as the "morning-after pill," to help them avoid becoming pregnant	64	67
Prohibit the government from interfering with private health care decisions made between a patient and her doctor	63	67
Ensure that the state cannot pass additional restrictions to abortion in cases where a woman's health is in jeopardy	58	58
Protect the right of individuals to get any FDA-approved contraceptive drugs or devices without state government interference or intrusion	58	48

*"Reachable voters" are defined in the footnote on p. 3