



Planned Parenthood®

# Monday *MONITOR*

January 16, 2007

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## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr. !!**

“There is no human circumstance more tragic than the persisting existence of a harmful condition for which a remedy is readily available.” These are the words of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., upon accepting the PPFA Margaret Sanger Award in May 1966. He was talking about the importance of family planning to the struggle to overcome poverty, disease, and global over-population. He continued: “There is scarcely anything more tragic in human life than a child who is not wanted... (I)n the need for family planning, Negro and white have a common bond; and together we can and should unite our strength...” Planned Parenthood proudly celebrates this 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the holiday honoring the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **MAKE HEALTH CARE THE FIRST PRIORITY: FIRST THINGS FIRST CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF**

A wide array of health advocates from across the state hosted a press conference in the Capitol on January 10, calling for the administration to support a common sense health plan that:

- ↳ Guarantees quality affordable health coverage for every Missourian
- ↳ Restores health coverage and services to those who were cut in 2005
- ↳ Makes health care for Missouri’s families a priority in 2007.

Advocates included labor unions, disability rights groups, social welfare and children’s advocates, and advocates for mental health, prevention services and budget priorities. Health consumer Bob Pund, noted: “Because of these cuts, I lost my job. I’m trying to live the American dream and be a productive citizen.” To support the First Things First campaign and sign the statewide petition, go to:

<http://www.ppaction.org/campaign/firstthingsfirst>.

## **SENATE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS POSTED**

In the Senate, leaders in both parties negotiated proportional party representation on committees. In some cases, this means that Democrats picked up a member. Nevertheless, in the three committees we anticipate will hear most reproductive health related bills (Judiciary, Seniors, and Rules), the overwhelming majority of members are anti-choice/anti-family planning. On the House side, Speaker Jetton has not released assignments yet, but we know that a majority of the committees are considered ‘special’ committees to which he appoints all members. The House has also chosen not to use proportional representation on committees, and to make committees smaller. Committees will now comprise five Republicans and three Democrats. We anticipate that most bills of concern to Planned Parenthood will be sent to special committees.

## **ROE V. WADE: 34<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS ACROSS THE STATE**

**St. Louis:** Thursday, January 18, 7:00—9:00pm. ‘How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America’ author Cristina Page will keynote at Mad Art in Soulard. Call 314.531.7526 ext.334 for information and tickets.

**Springfield:** Monday, January 22, 7:00pm. ‘The Education of Shelby Knox’ movie at The Moxie Cinema, 408 W Walnut, Springfield. For information and tickets, call 417.882.4668.

**Columbia:** Monday, January 22, 7:00pm. ‘The Education of Shelby Knox’ movie at Jessie Wrench Auditorium in Memorial Union South UMC campus. Call 573-443-0427 ext 241 for more information.

**Kirkville:** Monday, January 22, 7:30pm. ‘Why Roe Still Matters’ public forum at Truman State University, Baldwin 218. Call 660.665.5672 for more information.

**Kansas City:** Tuesday, January 23, 5:30-7:00pm. ‘Trust Women: Looking Back and Moving Forward.’ Californos Restaurant. 4124 Pennsylvania. Kansas City, MO. Call 913-312-5100 ext. 246 for information.

## **MEDICAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF LEGAL ABORTION**

Despite the claims of anti-choice ideologues, many demonstrable health benefits — physical, emotional, and social — have accrued to Americans since 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in its decision, *Roe v. Wade*. As the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this landmark decision approaches, it is important to remember how far *Roe* has brought us as a society and to note some of the many benefits that resulted from the legalization of abortion.

### **Since *Roe*, women obtain abortions earlier in pregnancy when health risks are lowest**

- In 1973, only 36 percent of abortions were performed at or before eight weeks of pregnancy (CDC, 2006).
- Today, 88 percent of all legal abortions are performed within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and 60.5 percent take place within the first eight weeks of pregnancy. (CDC, 2006).

### **Medically safe, legal abortion has a profound impact on American women and their families**

- Couples at risk of having children affected with severe and often fatal genetic disorders have been willing to conceive because of the availability of amniocentesis and safe, legal abortion (Milunsky, 1989).
- Following the legalization of abortion, the largest decline in birthrates were seen among women for whom the health and social consequences of unintended childbearing are the greatest — women over 35, teenagers, and unmarried women (Levine et al., 1999).
- Today, abortion is one of the most commonly performed clinical procedures, and fewer than 0.3 percent of women undergoing legal abortion procedures sustain a serious complication (Boonstra et al., 2006; Henshaw, 1999).
- If safe, legal abortion were not available, more women would experience unwanted childbearing, and unwanted childbearing affects the entire family. Mothers with unwanted births suffer from higher levels of depression and lower levels of happiness than mothers without unwanted births. They spank and slap their children more often than other mothers, and spend less leisure time outside the home with their children. Lower-quality mother/child relationships are not limited to the child born as a result of the unwanted pregnancy — all the children in the family suffer (Barber et al., 1999).
- The legalization of abortion has also improved the average living conditions of children. Because of increased access to abortion, cohorts born after 1973 are less likely than those born before 1973 to be in single-parent households, to live in poverty, and to receive welfare. They also experience lower infant mortality rates (Gruber et al., 1999).

### **Health & well-being of women & children suffer most in states with stringent anti-abortion laws**

- Compared to pro-choice states, anti-abortion states spend far less money per child on a range of services such as foster care, education, welfare, and the adoption of children who have physical and mental disabilities (Schroedel, 2000).
- The states that have the strongest antiabortion laws are also the states in which women suffer from lower levels of education and higher levels of poverty, as well as from a lower ratio of female-to-male earnings. They also have a lower percentage of women in the legislature and fewer mandates requiring insurance providers to cover minimum hospital stays after childbirth (Schroedel, 2000).

In sum, no amount of controversy over abortion can negate the evidence that American women, men, children, and families have reaped great benefits to their physical, mental, and social health from the U.S. Supreme Court's historic decision in *Roe v. Wade*. Any erosion of a woman's right and access to medically safe, legal abortion jeopardizes the health of women, their families, and the nation as a whole.

Statewide Website  
[www.ppmissouri.org](http://www.ppmissouri.org)

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