

Monday *MONITOR*

Wednesday, January 7, 2009
(cell)

Contact: Michelle Trupiano – 573.424.8717

HAPPY NEW YEAR...AND WELCOME BACK!

For those of you who are new to the legislature, or new to this publication, the **Monday MONITOR** is a weekly publication of the Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri. The goal of the **Monday MONITOR** is to keep you updated on the status of state legislation we are monitoring—both bills that would restrict access to health services and information as well as those that promote good public policy in these areas. We will also share information about what is happening at the Federal level and in the courts. We distribute the **Monday MONITOR** to all elected officials in Jefferson City regardless of positions on reproductive health, as well as to the Capitol press corps. In addition, we send this to Missouri's Congressional delegation so that they understand what is happening back home. We are providing contact information for our Public Affairs staff on the back of this edition of the **MONITOR**, but you can always contact our full-time staff lobbyist, Michelle Trupiano, at the number above; she is in the Capitol most days during session.

2008 ABORTION RESTRICTION BILL RE-FILED

On the first day of pre-filing—December 1, 2008—**Rep. Cynthia Davis** (R-O'Fallon) filed **HB46**, the original Bob Onder Abortion Restriction Bill. This rambling, checklist bill contains numerous new, burdensome and duplicative requirements for counseling, evaluating, and performing abortion procedures that—according to the proponents—are to 'protect women.' In reality, these burdens will likely push women farther into their pregnancy before they are able to obtain the abortion. The bill also creates the new felony crime of "coercing an abortion" and removes decision-making entirely from the woman seeking the procedure. It will do nothing to prevent unintended pregnancy in Missouri and should not be given a hearing.

BUT, ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...

Sen. Jolie Justus (D-Kansas City) has pre-filed **SB104** that seeks to prevent cervical cancer through increased awareness of and access to the HPV vaccine. The bill requires MO-DHSS to send information to the parents or guardians of all females entering the 6th grade about the connection between HPV and cervical cancer and the availability of the HPV vaccine. It does not require the vaccine for admission to school.

ROE V. WADE 36TH ANNIVERSARY: HONORING OUR CHAMPIONS & CELEBRATING CHOICE

◆ **KANSAS CITY:** Monday, January 19, 7:00pm at The Record Bar, 1020 Westport Road, join us for the 'Countdown to Change.' Countdown the hours to a new administration and celebrate the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Featuring: live entertainment from local bands, delicious food and drink specials. Purchase your tickets online at www.ppkm.org or contact Sarah at 913.312.5100 x245 or sarah.henderson@ppkm.org.

◆ **ST. LOUIS:** Thursday, January 22, 6:00—9:00pm, The Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Road. **Honor outgoing pro-choice champions** and welcome the new! Mix, mingle and enjoy a performance by **Summer Osborne**. Appetizers, dessert, coffee & wine. Contact Angie at 314.531.7526 x 334; angie.postal@pplsr.org

◆ **SPRINGFIELD:** Thursday, January 22, 7:00pm at Millie's turn-of-the-century café, 313 S Jefferson. Honor our first annual "**Champion of Choice**" Representative **Sara Lampe**. Appetizers, cash bar & raffle. Contact Crystal at 417.883.3800 or crystal.brigman@pplsr.org

◆ **COLUMBIA:** Thursday, January 22, an exclusive film screening of "Vera Drake" at the RagTag Cinema. Reception at 6:30, film at 7:00. Limited space available. Please contact Michelle at 573-424-8717 or michelle.trupiano@ppkm.org.

AN UNCONSCIONABLE CONSCIENCE RULE

Editorial, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: Wednesday, Dec. 24 2008

Doctors take an oath to put their patients' interests first. A new Bush administration rule will change that.

The so-called "conscience rule" is one of a host of last-minute regulatory changes being made in the waning hours of President George W. Bush's tenure in office.

The rule prohibits recipients of federal money from such programs as Medicare and Medicaid from taking any sort of disciplinary action against doctors, nurses or pharmacists who refuse to perform certain duties because of their convictions.

Under the rule, pharmacists are allowed to refuse to fill a prescription for contraceptives or for medications associated with medical abortion. A doctor can refuse to tell a pregnant patient about the availability of abortion even if the patient asks about it and even if a continued pregnancy threatens the patient's life.

On the other side of the equation, the rights of some patients will be sacrificed. Some poor women, especially those who live in rural areas with limited access to care, will be unable to get complete information or get some prescriptions filled because of the new rule.

In some cases, a physician's medical decisions could, in essence, be overridden by a pharmacy technician invoking the new rule and refusing to provide prescribed drugs.

Offering appropriate abortion counseling or contraceptives is part of the standard of care for a wide range of health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and epilepsy. The new rule would allow some doctors to choose a lesser standard.

That's dangerous and unnecessary. There already exists a large body of case law that protects the religious rights of medical practitioners. This ill-considered new rule goes beyond that. It could make it harder for hospitals to discipline incompetent doctors by transforming disciplinary hearings from investigations of medical competence into arguments about religious persecution.

Michael O. Leavitt, the Bush administration secretary for Health and Human Services, lauded the rule last week. "Doctors and other health care professionals shouldn't be forced to choose between good professional standing and violating their conscience," he said.

No such conflict should exist. Doctors, nurses and pharmacists choose professions that put patients' rights first. If they foresee that priority becoming problematic for them, they should choose another profession.

President-elect Barack Obama's administration can and should rescind the rule, even though the process will take time. Decisions about care are best made by a patient and a health care provider who places that patient's best medical interests above any other issue.

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