

Anti-Choice Ashcroft Now in Charge of Justice *Abortion Rights in Danger*

By Nancy K. Montagnino

The most controversial and ideologically conservative members of George W. Bush's cabinet, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, pose a significant threat to women's reproductive health.

Both as Attorney General and as Governor of Missouri, Ashcroft developed a record of vehement opposition to abortion. This record was only enhanced by his subsequent stint in the U.S. Senate. His actions included:

- Signing into Missouri law a bill which defined life as beginning at conception, and prohibited abortions at publicly funded facilities.
- Co-sponsoring a 1998 resolution calling for a "Human Life" amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The resolution defined



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U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft

"unborn offspring" as including "every stage of biological development including fertilization." This definition would render illegal several of the most common contraceptives, including the pill and IUD. Abortion would be

prohibited even in cases of rape or incest.

- Voting against a 1999 Senate resolution that expressed support for the basic tenets of *Roe v Wade*. As U.S. Attorney General, Ashcroft is

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Spitzer Sues Again to Protect Clinic Access

By Eve Widdows

The days of former Attorney General Dennis Vacco's flagrant neglect of women's right to clinic access are over. New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer successfully enjoined the barring of access to clinics in the Rochester and Buffalo areas. With this action he signaled his resolve to protect right of entry for women to obtain reproductive health care services.

Spitzer's latest effort is the first action brought under New York's new clinic access law. It alleges that Victoria and Joseph Kraeger and their two daughters "...have repeatedly interfered with, harassed and intimidated those seeking service

at...clinics." The suit also alleges violations of the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

The Kraeger family is accused of the following violations of state and federal law:

- *Delivering a package that looked like a bomb to a local health clinic;



NYS Attorney General Eliot Spitzer

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Women's Health and Wellness

Once again, landmark health legislation which would have significantly improved women's access to health care, has failed to become the law in New York State. The Women's Health and Wellness Act was written to enable women to obtain essential preventative health treatment and stop insurance companies from discriminating against women by refusing to cover doctor-prescribed contraceptives

The state Assembly overwhelmingly passed a "clean" version of the Women's Health and Wellness bill. If

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Election 2000—WCLA Won

By Nancy K. Montagnino

If only there were more grassroots organizations like WCLA – especially in Florida. In Westchester County, voters, armed with WCLA's Voting Guides, selected pro-choice candidates nearly all across the board.

Al Gore handily defeated anti-choice George W. Bush 59% to 37% according to the official tally from the Board of Elections. Hillary Clinton, likewise, was a winner here.

In an op-ed piece appearing in the *Journal News* on Dec. 18, 2000, Michael R. Edelman, an attorney, political strategist and member of the Executive Committee of the county Republican Party, blamed Rick Lazio's loss to Hillary in part on his decision to adopt the stance of the Conservative Party and oppose so-called partial birth abortion.

In the five county race for Justice of the Supreme Court (9th Judicial District) former Westchester County Executive, turned Court of Claims judge Andrew O'Rourke, who was not endorsed, LOST in the Westchester County portion of the district to William J. Giacomo, who was endorsed by WCLA. O'Rourke, however, was able to ultimately win the race due to the results in the four remaining counties.

The race for Surrogate Court Judge went from staid to contentious when ten-year incumbent Republican Albert Emanuelli opted to take the Right to Life line, despite the warnings of campaign consultants that there would be a backlash from supporters of choice. Anthony Scarpino, a Justice of the Supreme Court, was the Democratic nominee. Emanuelli had a total of five minor party lines, as compared to one for Scarpino. Emanuelli also received the endorsement of the *Journal News* editorial board.

Scarpino criticized Emanuelli's acceptance of the Right to Life line, forcefully stating that judicial candidates

should not be accepting the endorsement of one-issue parties. WCLA endorsed Scarpino for Surrogate, and Justice Scarpino publicized

the endorsement. WCLA-PAC worked the phones for Scarpino, who coasted to a 57% to 43% victory.

In another hotly contested judicial race, Democratic challenger Lester Adler, who was enthusiastically endorsed by WCLA, ousted Republican incumbent Westchester County Court Judge Alphonse Naclerio by 56% to 42%.

The most controversial WCLA endorsement was that of Senator Nicholas Spano, the Republican incumbent, over Democratic challenger Thomas Abinanti. Both are pro-choice. However, Nick Spano, as state Senator, has been a senatorial leader on the reproductive rights front. As such, he earned the endorsement. Spano defeated Abinanti, despite running in an overwhelmingly Democratic district. Spano publicized WCLA's endorsement.

A closely-watched match-up pitted pro-choice advocate Amy Paulin (the Democratic nominee) against Republican businessman Max DiFabio for the 88th Assembly District. Paulin received the WCLA endorsement in recognition of her many years of activism on behalf of women's rights. On election night, Paulin came out ahead and she now serves in the State Assembly.

Local pro-choice advocates cannot rest on their laurels; nationwide, with the selection of George W. Bush and a conservative Congress, choice lost.

The 2001 elections are considered "off-year." Westchester voters will elect a County Executive, County Clerk, and District Attorney. All 17 members of the Board of Legislators are facing election. To date, two incumbents – pro-choice Paul Noto and anti-choice Kay Carsky – have announced plans to retire. Due to the bleak national outlook on choice resulting from the Presidential election, local races take on more significance. If the Supreme Court reverses Roe, whether or not abortion is legal in New York State will be in the hands of the state legislature and governor. State-wide candidates for 2002 are already campaigning – and pro-choice advocates are well-advised to pay attention to what they are saying.



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Circulation: 71,000 Founded in 1972

We The People

By Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, Chair of the Board, WCLA
Recently, I had the privilege of representing WCLA at a press conference called by Senator Clinton to announce her opposition to the Ashcroft nomination. As representatives of different organizations spoke, the most overwhelming thought I had was not of the devastating implications that Ashcroft's nomination had for a woman's right to choose. (That fact was already more than clear to me.)

Instead, I was struck by how very much we all need each other now. Our ability not only to survive over the next four years but also to succeed depends on our ability to unite. We became quite complacent over the past eight years as we campaigned independently for our causes – reproductive rights, women's rights, civil rights, the environment, education, gun control, gay rights, and so many more. If our audience was not always eager, President Clinton was at least listening.

But this is a new age! The Bush strategy is quite simple: divide and conquer. Treat all opposition groups as "fringe" extremists. Portray them as irrational. Isolate them, and then decimate them.

This strategy can and will work only if we do not unite. We must not allow ourselves to become despon-

dent and inert. Instead, we must support each other's causes. We must make our presence known as a united front. We do not lack in numbers. We cannot allow ourselves to lack in energy, commitment, or compassion.

Prior to the press conference, group after group – the Sierra Club, NAACP, Million Moms March, Hispanic Federation, Citizen Action, NOW, and many others – spoke of their concerns. A common theme ran throughout: that by nominating Ashcroft the current administration has made clear its intent to roll back the clock, to destroy all the progress that we have made in civil rights, women's rights and the environment, and to insure that the weakest of us will be the most handicapped in the future.

But only if we let it happen. Dr. Seuss said it so well in *Horton Hears A Who!*:
"‘This,’ cried the Mayor, ‘is your town’s darkest hour! The Time for all Whos who have blood that is red To come to the aid of their country!’ he said.
‘We’ve GOT to make noises in greater amounts! So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!’"

If we are to survive these next four years we must unite down to the littlest who in Whoville.

Thanks, Audrey Hochberg

Throughout Audrey Hochberg's long political tenure as a county and state legislator, she has been consistently and outspokenly pro-choice. Now that she has retired from the State Assembly we will miss her. Audrey has been a dear friend of WCLA. We wish to take this opportunity to thank her for her many votes for women.



Oops!

In the last issue of ProChoice, an error appeared on the list of elected officials. Please note that Jim Maisano, County Legislator from the 11th District, is pro-choice and should have had a + next to his name. We apologize for the error.

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- *Posting signs that offer a "reward" for the identification of clinic staff members;
- *Regularly accosting, crowding, blocking, and standing in front of patients as they approach clinic entrances;
- *Chasing and yelling at patients and staff as they leave clinics; and
- *Creating a safety hazard and public nuisance by standing in or near clinic driveways with large signs that obstruct departing drivers' view of oncoming traffic.

Attorney General Spitzer states, "This action is necessary to ensure that law and order is maintained at reproductive health care clinics and that the intent of Congress and the State Legislature to ensure access to these clinics is upheld. Individuals who seek to provide reproductive health care services should be able to do so without encountering threats and intimidation."

We say "bravo." The change is outstanding. Attorney General Spitzer is to be congratulated for his efforts.

The Tommy Thompson Myth: Thompson as Moderate

By Deena Weintraub

Despite his promise to present a “compassionate conservative” administration, George W. Bush has appointed overwhelmingly right-wing ideologues to his cabinet, not the least of which is Tommy Thompson, now Secretary of Health and Human Services, formerly Governor of Wisconsin. The Department of Health and Human Services directly affects women’s health and reproductive services.

Thompson has made his reputation within the Republican Party as a moderate, but a look at his activities while Governor of Wisconsin shows otherwise.

Tommy Thompson has a record of anti-choice, anti-women activity. In 1997, he signed a far-reaching Wisconsin law that declared that a fetus was a human being from the time of conception, and described abortion as a procedure meant to “kill a child.” Supposedly, this was a so-called “partial birth” abortion ban, but in reality it applied to all abortions in the state. Mandatory life imprisonment was the penalty that doctors risked for performing any abortion - even in the first trimester - and women were leaving the state to get abortions. The law ultimately was declared unconstitutional.

Additionally, Thompson signed legislation prohibiting insurance provided through the Private Employer Health Care Purchasing Alliance (a voluntary program for private employers) from covering abortion services with only very narrow exemp-

tions. He signed legislation both requiring a 24-hour waiting period and a provision that women receive in-person, biased counseling that referred to an “unborn child.” He has opposed clinic safety “buffer zones” that require demonstrators to stay at least 15 feet away from women’s clinic entrances.

As Secretary of HHS, Thompson has vowed to take a “second look” at and review the FDA-approved RU-486, hoping to get FDA approval rescinded. RU-486 is a non-surgical method of abortion for early pregnancies which has been used in Europe for many years. It succeeded in American clinical trials and was released last year, giving women a nonsurgical option for ending early pregnancies. Inflammatory anti-choice rhetoric claims that RU-486 is dangerous for women, a claim not borne out by recent American or European clinical trials. According to Senator Hillary Clinton, “the evidence of the efficacy and safety of RU-486 is convincing, and I would be very concerned if a decision were made on political grounds instead of on medical or scientific grounds.” Thompson’s bias against RU-486 is shaped by his long-standing anti-choice attitude, not his concern for women’s safety.

Thompson supports school vouchers (which he calls “pro-school choice”), is against gun control, and supports giving public funds, including monies for public education, to church-run programs.

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responsible for enforcing the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE). He has steadfastly opposed this law crafted by Senator Charles Schumer, which protects women, health care providers, and clinic workers from violence and harassment at reproductive health facilities.

Ashcroft will have the ear of the President on matters relating to the selection of nominees to the federal bench, including the U.S. Supreme Court. The Attorney General counsels the President on the constitutionality of proposed legislation, and, through the Office of the Solicitor General, represents the government before the Supreme Court.

Ashcroft was well prepped for his Senate confirmation hearing. He surprised supporters and foes alike when he stated

that he accepted the *Roe v Wade* decision as “the settled law of the land.” He then promised that he would enforce federal laws protecting a woman’s access to abortion services. Calling his remarks a “confirmation conversion,” pro-choice advocates have strong reason to question his willingness to “abandon his life’s work of championing the unborn” in favor of protecting the reproductive rights of women.

President Bush’s nomination of Ashcroft as US Attorney General was confirmed virtually along party lines. All 50 Republican Senators, along with 8 of their Democratic colleagues, voted to confirm the nominee; the 42 remaining Democratic Senators voted against the nominee. New York Senators Schumer and Clinton voted against Ashcroft’s nomination.

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an employer provided an insurance plan with coverage for prescriptions, doctor-prescribed contraceptives were to be covered. The proposed law also included mandatory insurance coverage for bone density testing and annual mammograms once women turned 40. This legislation overcame discrimination on the basis of sex. Currently, women in their reproductive years spend 68 percent more out-of-pocket for health care costs than do men, primarily due to contraception.

This sex discrimination was in fact recognized by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission when it issued a ruling in December 2000 finding discrimination in the exclusion from employee health plans of the costs of prescription contraceptives while vasectomies and Viagra were covered.

The State Senate opted to pass its own version of Women’s Health and Wellness – complete with a major

loophole. The state Senate exempted religious employers and HMOs from providing birth control coverage if it offended their conscience. Under this version, thousands of New York’s women would be without the benefits of comprehensive health care legislation.

Beth Quinn, writing for The Middletown (NY) *Times Herald-Record* in an article entitled “Just whose conscience is it, anyway?” put it succinctly: “Here’s a funny little sentence: ‘HMOs should follow their conscience over whether to cover birth control for women.’” She goes on to say: “Did you ever hear the words ‘conscience’ and ‘HMO’ used in the same sentence before? I never did.”

In an effort to resolve the impasse over the two versions, a conference committee was impaneled to iron out the differences. The conference committee has come up empty-handed. New York’s women are empty-handed again, too.

The 2000 Presidential Election: What It Means

By Eve Widdows

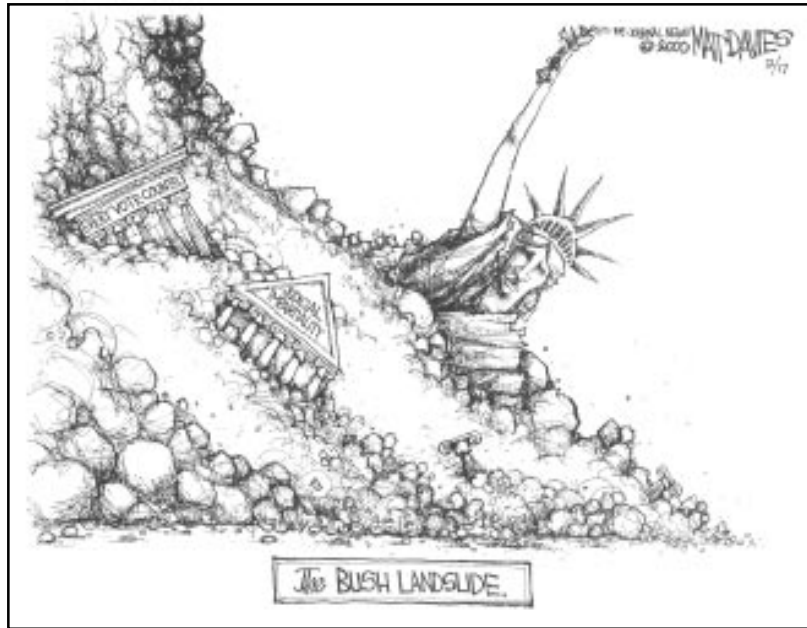
Election night 2000 was proceeding within the forecasts of a close election. The polls indicated that Texas Governor George W. Bush was ahead of Vice President Al Gore by about three percentage points. Then a media nightmare occurred: with the polls still open, one network called Florida for Gore. Others followed, and we were off on a civics lesson most of us will never forget. Not since 1876, when Rutherford B. Hayes defeated Samuel J. Tilden, has there been such a contest.

When I was in the sixth grade one of the subjects I had to study was called "Civics." The dictionary defines it as: "the political science of the rights and duties of citizens, and of civic affairs." The year 2000 elections made us aware of the fragile nature of democracy. The role of each of the three branches of government became the focus of intense scrutiny: the legislative (whose responsibility is to select electors), the executive (whose responsibility is the conduct of elections and certification of electors), and the judicial (whose responsibility is to determine the validity of contested election matters).

We learned that, as in much of the United States, each Florida county conducted elections differently. The word "chad" was introduced to us; and an executive from the voting machines' manufacturer told us that each machine should be cleaned once a year. We learned that in Florida some of the machines had not been cleaned in eight years. This helped us understand why some of the chads, although punched, did not completely separate from the voter's card, which resulted in their not being counted.

What followed was a crazy quilt of charges and counter-charges. The Gore camp initially asked for a recount limited to a few counties; then for all counties. The error of not immediately asking for a complete hand recount may have cost the Vice President the election. Florida's Secretary of State, Katherine Harris, an appointee of Governor Jeb Bush, George W.'s brother, placed limitations on the recount process from the start.

Then the court cases began: state courts, federal courts, and the U.S. Supreme Court came into play. Florida state courts ruled in favor of Gore, ordering the recount to continue. In a ruling that went against their own standing opinions in two areas, States Rights and the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution, the U.S. Supreme Court decided to stop the Florida recount. The decision awarded Florida's 25 electoral votes and the presidency to Bush. This action



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may have the most lasting effect of all. Supreme Courts of the past rendered decisions which knocked out Jim Crow laws, including the use of poll taxes, and literacy tests which denied minorities and the poor the right to vote. The current Supreme Court used its power to disenfranchise.

Gore received 337,000 more popular votes nationwide, and Bush won Florida by

little more than 500 votes. Without a complete recount of contested votes involving things like dimpled and hanging chads and the contested votes of minorities, there is a feeling the election was stolen.

President Bush, with his inaugural and State of the Union speeches, as well as visits with Democrats, sounded as though he intended to govern with moderation. Actions speak louder than words, and with the appointment of an ultraconservative Attorney General, John Ashcroft, the immediate assault on reproductive rights, the proposal to fund "faith-based" (i.e., religious) programs, and the reversal of strides made in environmental conservation, he has made it abundantly clear that he has forsaken the "compassionate conservative" guise for his true colors.

The Door for Women at the White House

By Fran Snedeker

Without flourish or fanfare the White House has shown women to the door – the exit door, that is. No press release accompanied the closing of the Women's Initiatives and Outreach office at the end of March. This small office, opened in 1995, was a focal point for economic issues that affect women. Without this resource, women have lost yet one more means of making their voice heard.

President Bush claims that his agenda and choice of staff spell expanded opportunities for women, but reality belies his assertions. Bush has placed in a top job at the Council of Economic Advisers Diana Furchtgott-Roth, who asserts that there is no gender gap in pay scales. Kay Cole James, new head of the Office of Personnel Management, is responsible for formulating policies and work rules for federal employees. This is the same Ms. James who is on record as saying that "radical feminists" are overwrought about rape.

All this leads us to wonder who in the White House will listen to women.

GOP Pro-Choicers Would Rather Fight than Switch

From time to time WCLA will ask members of the pro-choice community to express themselves in our newsletter. Our first guest columnists, whose comments appear on this page, are Lynn Grefe, a national director of the Republican Pro-Choice Coalition, and Br. Clark Berge, SSF, an Episcopalian priest. C.A.R.E. 2000's Leslie Watson's remarks are on page 12.

By Lynn Grefe, National Director, Republican Pro-Choice Coalition, www.gopchoice.org.

Pro-choice Republicans are often asked why they don't just become Democrats. The simplest answer is that beyond the social issues, Republicans prefer the fiscal conservatism of their Party, believing that those governed least are governed best.

Most Republicans do not want to outlaw abortion. Many are inclined toward restrictions, but that is often due to the misleading rhetoric of the anti-choice movement. You might ask, "If most Republicans feel this way, why are abortion rights and family planning under attack from the GOP?"

Because pro-choice Republicans have been ostracized from their own national Party, reduced to merely whispering their pro-choice views to

sympathetic friends. At the Republican Pro-Choice Coalition, we are urging people to put their shoulders back and proclaim, loud and proud, that they are both pro-choice and Republican.

After all, Republicans led the way on reproductive health issues through most of this century. Only recently has a well-funded and well-organized faction of moralists corrupted the Party's themes of "limited government" and "individual liberty." Our opposition has clout within the GOP because it delivers from the pulpits to the polls on Election Day. But most analyses of voting trends show that this clout is waning: outside of the South, suburban voters rejected anti-choice Republicans in most contests last November. We are urging our Party leaders to wake up to this trend before it's too late.

To carry out our mission, for the past two years the Coalition has developed chapters to bring our message to state capitols. Last year we opposed the GOP's anti-choice platform plank with a well-tuned war room in Philadelphia. We did not win, but we have never been closer. We were three votes away from bringing the issue to the floor of the convention.

We are now conducting our Proxy Campaign, asking people to sign a

proxy authorizing us to lobby state and federal representatives on their behalf. At our first national conference and lobby day in Washington D.C. we hand-delivered more than 800 proxies to members of Congress with our position clearly stated – that it's really all about women's health.

The road ahead is challenging. While we work to bring our Party back to a position of respect for reproductive health, we join the fight to protect the services of Planned Parenthood and other providers around the country and the world. We compete with no one; rather we try to energize our base, help pro-choice Republican candidates, and lobby Republican legislators every chance we get. The larger our numbers the more impact we will have.

The goal is clear: it should not matter which Party is in control, because control must always remain with the woman. Until we bring our Party to support that belief, our efforts will continue. Sometimes it's one vote at a time, but we have no intention of quitting!

We dream of the day when there are always two pro-choice candidates at the top of every ticket. Only then will we have secured the rights of all women, regardless of Party politics.

Back to the Future: The Comstock Act

By Nancy K. Montagnino

Some lawyers believed that the 1873 Comstock Act was relegated to dusty law books. Think again.

The act was named for Anthony Comstock, the secretary of the New York-based Committee for the Suppression of Vice. The Comstock Act barred Americans from sending pornography and information about birth control and abortion through the US mail. While the act remained technically "on the books," the references to birth control and abortion were deleted in 1971, only to be reinserted (via sponsorship of abortion foe, Henry Hyde) into the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Now prohibited is the receiving or spreading of information about abortion on the Internet. President Clinton told women's rights advocates not to worry since his Justice Department wouldn't enforce the provision. Well, George W. Bush is now President and John Ashcroft is Attorney General. Legal experts are now telling women's groups, "Don't worry, the Comstock Act is unconstitutional." Meanwhile, blow the dust off the law books.

The Inspiration Of Scripture

*By Br. Clark Berge, SSF
Brother Clark, a member of the Society of St. Francis (a religious order in the Episcopal Church), is Guardian of Little Portion Friary in Mt. Sinai, NY, and Protestant chaplain at SUNY-Stony Brook.*

Often in the debate about abortion, opponents to abortion stake their authority on reading the Bible. This statement implies that supporters of abortion and reproductive choice do not read the Bible, and that there is only one correct way to read and interpret Scripture. This attitude reduces Scriptural reflection to ideological conformity. My experience of Scripture is very different. Reading Scripture stimulates me to see

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Bush Imposes Death Penalty on Women in Developing Countries

by Fran Snedeker

On his first work day in the White House, President George W. Bush signed the death penalty for millions of women in developing countries. With a simple flourish of the Presidential pen he reinstated the Global Gag Rule which will effectively eliminate their access to family planning care. The President has wreaked havoc on America's assistance to family planning programs overseas, which has been one of the most successful long-term efforts of U.S. foreign aid.

The Gag Rule rescinds free speech for foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that accept American family planning funds; it interferes in the doctor/patient relationship of these charities; and it reduces access by millions of families in underdeveloped countries to modern family planning methods.

The President claimed that his executive order ended "taxpayer funding of overseas abortion." This misstatement of the facts can hardly be anything other than a purposeful attempt to mislead the American public into thinking that U.S. foreign aid has been used to promote or underwrite

abortions overseas. The truth, as Bush and his publicists well know, is that United States law has prohibited the funding of overseas abortions with the use of U.S. funds since 1973.

What the White House and its anti-abortion friends are really achieving via the Gag Rule is the imposition of rules which would be patently unconstitutional if imposed within our borders. The White House does not hesitate, however, to deploy U.S. taxpayer money to impose anti-democratic practices overseas.

In human terms, the Gag Rule has a serious "chilling effect on those NGOs in developing countries which have undertaken the challenge of offering a



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full range of reproductive health care services to people in need," says Allan Rosenfield, M.D., Dean of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia and world renowned family planning and reproductive health expert. Dr. Rosenfield explains that these overseas NGOs must now choose either to continue to provide high quality family planning care with severely reduced funds or forbid their branches to

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Scripture, from page 6

myself and the world differently, often posing radical questions and offering many choices.

It is also possible to have widely diverging opinions about a Biblical text and still share a reverence for it. Because scripture-readers' differing experiences impact on how they understand Scripture, the extent to which they see themselves and their circumstances reflected in Scripture determines the degree to which the Bible shapes their thinking. If we scan Scripture for very simple rules to guide our lives we may be missing the greatest treasure of the Bible. The Bible is a collection of inspired stories that tell how people have struggled to understand God and their world over thousands of years. Each story's characters can speak to some part of ourselves, if we are honest, and can encourage our understanding of modern circumstances.

The inspiration of Scripture is a maverick one. We don't think outside the "box" because we are afraid to be

wrong, so we conform to the interpretations that are given to us, sometimes discounting the very loud voice inside us that is witnessing to something very different. We need to prize our own experiences. If we give up the idea of one, exclusive, "correct" interpretation, the everyday concerns of women, poor people, and minority communities can be recognized in Scripture. Most often the engagement produces questions, and every reader is invited to carry and ponder these questions. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke reminds us, if we live with the questions, we will discover one day that we are living the answer; the important thing is to ask the questions.

For such seekers, the moral authority of Scripture is real. As the Scriptural witness to human life unfolds, a trajectory becomes apparent; a tendency towards justice, might be the best way to put it. With this in mind, the specific teachings of the Bible may be evaluated through a critical lens. Civilized people reject slavery,

yet the Bible allows it. The same is true about polygamy. Changes in society shape our understanding of Scripture, and vice versa. Our changing understanding of Scripture can shape our view of society. Contemporary social changes about the role of women in society are framing new questions for people to bring to their Bible study. As they see themselves in the stories in new ways, the question of where God is leading them can be tremendously empowering.

A Biblical commitment to justice and freedom inspired by Old and New Testament stories and people may question entrenched religious authority, and may challenge some dominant social systems. With our Biblically-sharpened vision we might look to people suffering under an authoritarian and arbitrary system that tries to separate people and enslave communities, or a patriarchal system that discounts the dignity of others, especially of women.

Gagging the Gagger

By Fran Snedeker

The reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule has inspired a forthright response in both houses of Congress. Very soon after the original announcement by the President, Senator Barbara Boxer (CA-D) and Westchester's own Representative Nita Lowey joined forces to introduce the Global Democracy Protection Act in the Senate and the House of Representatives with the intention of undoing President Bush's executive action [see article on page 7].

More recently, on March 20, Boxer and a bipartisan group of Senators adopted a more aggressive tactic to overturn the President's executive order of January 23. They have submitted a "resolution of disapproval" as prescribed by the 1996 Congressional Review Act. A "streamlined way of rolling back regulations" less than 60 days old is possible thanks to this act. By the week's end 30 Senators had already signed this resolution.

Strong Pro-Choice Voices Needed

Despite the fact that he currently resides in the White House, there is no way that George W. Bush has a mandate to take this country on a hard right course. Yet, that is exactly what he has been doing. Where is the opposition?

Robert Kuttner in *The American Prospect*, after posing the query as to whether or not the Democrats were on Prozac, proceeded to offer four possible explanations for their "blissful haze of bipartisanship."

First, Kuttner notes that the Democratic unity is undercut by their own center-right. Second, the Democrats, starting with Al Gore, are "bending over backwards" to be conciliatory in order not to incur the wrath of the voters in 2002. Third, the media speaks of the importance of moderation. Last, some senate Democrats are looking for constructive bi-partisanship.

Salon.com's Jake Tapper, in an article entitled "The mystery of the Docile Democrats" debunks the notion that the Democrats are "taking a dive" as a "rather simplistic

This action so alarmed the President that he withdrew his original order. At press time he had just issued a new "memorandum" on the Global Gag Rule (which he likes to call the "Mexico City Policy" in memory of Reagan days) which replaces his original "rule." The newest action has the same deleterious effect on powerless women in the developing world, but a memorandum is not subject to congressional revocation via the Congressional Review Act. "The President has determined the most effective way to have his Mexico City policy carried out," says White House press secretary Ari Fleischer.

Boxer assures us that the President is not home free on this issue. "No matter how he executes his policy," she says "it doesn't change the fact that the denying of family-planning assistance will lead to an increase in the number of deaths due to unsafe abortions."

analysis" which drives Democrats on Capitol Hill "crazy." Rep. Barney Frank is quoted as saying "This whole notion that we're not fighting him is journalistic b...." Among the examples he cites are the Ashcroft hearings.

Clearly, some Democrats are leading the charge against the Bush agenda. Advocates for choice are well-represented by Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who immediately sought to undo the executive order re-instituting the global gag rule via Congressional legislation. Senator Charles Schumer had some pointed questions for Attorney-General designate John Ashcroft. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was also vocal in her opposition to his nomination.

Some pundits believe the Ashcroft battle was a prelude to what is expected to be feverish outrage when Bush announces a nominee to the Supreme Court of the United States. The opposition is simply biding its time.

Candidates are already jockeying for position for the 2002 elections. The entire House of Representatives is facing an election, as is one-third of the United States Senate. With the current 50/50 split in the Senate, 2002 represents a real opportunity for the Bush opposition. Since any Supreme Court nominee would have to be confirmed by the Senate, Democratic control would be of significant import, and could lead Bush to choose a more moderate jurist.

Money from Mexico?

We know that our President has done his homework when he discusses the Global Gag Rule as knowledgeably as he did when speaking to Catholic leaders a few weeks ago. Calling the Gag Rule the "Mexico City Policy" (just like they did in his daddy's day in the White House), he said: "My job – listen, there will be legislative initiatives and there will be the sort of money from Mexico, you know the thing there, the executive order I signed about Mexico City."

Penalty, from page 7

continue well established programs bringing reproductive health care to women in these countries. Many of these agencies have already entered into contractual relationships with American counterparts, such as EngenderHealth (formerly AVSC International), for reproductive health care work. Even though these programs focus totally on improving access to better family planning care, the contracts are endangered by the malicious imposition of the Gag Rule.

South Carolina and the Supreme Court: Some Bad News and Some Good News

Anti-choice legislators are using the power of regulation to undermine abortion rights. In February, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Greenville Women's Clinic v. Bryant* let stand a 27-page book of regulations for South Carolina abortion clinics. The rules ran the gamut from the training of clinic workers to the width of office doors.

In their suit, four South Carolina doctors argued that the regulations were medically pointless and treated early-term abortions differently from other similarly low-risk medical procedures. Margie Kelly, a spokeswoman for the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (which represented the doctors) was quoted by the Associated Press as saying: "It is a much more subtle form of discrimination against abortion but as significant as any anti-

abortion tactic that has come down the pike in the last decade." She continued, "These are new burdens just based on the fact that the state opposes abortion. These are political motivations, not health motivations."

At press time, over the objections of the State, a district court has blocked South Carolina's medically unnecessary and harmful regulations on first trimester abortions from taking effect. This ruling grants South Carolina physicians who perform abortions time to comply with the regulations' mandates.

Meanwhile, in *Ferguson v. City of Charleston*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that it is unconstitutional to conduct a drug test on a pregnant woman for the purpose of alerting police to a crime without a warrant or valid consent. At issue was a program

by the Medical University of South Carolina and the Charleston police by which doctors tested the urine of patients for drugs. If the results were positive, law enforcement was alerted. No search warrants were obtained. Justice John Paul Stevens, writing for the majority, said that using a state hospital's test to get evidence of a patient's criminal conduct was an unreasonable search if the patient had not consented. Priscilla Smith, an attorney at the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy who represented one of the plaintiffs, was quoted as saying: "The court confirmed that pregnant women have the same constitutional rights as other Americans, including the right to maintain a confidential doctor-patient relationship."

Bankruptcy Update

News coverage of the bankruptcy reform debate in Congress has centered on credit card companies and the banking industry. Pro-choice advocates should be aware that another provision may spark acrimonious debate when the Senate and House conference committees meet. The Senate's version of the bankruptcy reform legislation includes the amendment sponsored by Senator Charles Schumer. This amendment will prevent people from using bankruptcy procedures to avoid civil and criminal damages resulting from FACE (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances) violations or clinic violence. Unfortunately, the House version does not contain this provision, the inclusion of which will face some stiff opposition.



Senator Charles Schumer

James Kopp Arrested

The man suspected of murdering Dr. Barnett Slepian in 1998 has been arrested. James Kopp, a fugitive on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list who has been on the run for more than two years, was apprehended in France on March 29. At press time, extradition proceedings were pending.

In addition to New York State criminal charges, Kopp is facing federal charges, including violation of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE) and causing death with a firearm.

Dr. Slepian, an obstetrician-gynecologist who performed abortions, was 52 years old at the time of his death. He was gunned down while talking with his family in his kitchen.

Ironically, Kopp's arrest occurred one day after a federal appeals court threw out a record \$109 million verdict against anti-abortion activists. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a website and wanted posters which branded doctors who provided abortions "baby butchers" and criminals were deserving of the protections of the First Amendment. The web site was known as the "Nuremberg Files" and listed the names and addresses of abortion providers, declaring them guilty of crimes against humanity. The man who ran the site was not a defendant in the suit, but his internet provider shut down the site following the verdict.

Dr. Slepian's name was listed on the site, only to be crossed off the same day he was killed.

Please support WCLA. See coupon on page 15.

**ACTION
ALERT!
ACTION
ALERT!**

These are the women and men elected to ensure your rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Your task is to help them remember that protection of your reproductive rights is an integral part of their job. They need to hear from you by fax, phone, letter, e-mail, or personal visit. Save this list and use it often!

Your Elected Officials: Keep For Future Reference

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CBL 17 Katherine Carsky [-] R,C,I,F◇

Key

+	Pro-choice	I	Independence
-	Anti-choice	L	Liberal
+/-	Mixed, qualified	RTL	Right to Life
D	Democrat	F	Freedom
R	Republican	W	Working
C	Conservative	G	Green
		◇	Has run on RTL

This list keeps improving because YOU elect pro-choice candidates.

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the editor

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White Plains, NY 10604
Fax: 914/696-8396
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The Age of Bush: Politicians Playing Doctor

By Nita Lowey

Last fall, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the drug Mifeprex (RU-486). The decision came after more than a decade of fighting and attempts by anti-choice extremists to deny women access to this safe and effective drug. In the end, science, not politics, guided the FDA's decision.



After five years of U.S. review, 12 years of European experience, and the success of U.S. trials including nearly 10,000 women, Mifeprex's safety and efficacy was confirmed. However, the anti-choice community is unmoved by these facts, and not surprisingly, on the heels of the FDA's decision, federal legislation to block access to the drug was introduced.

I'm disappointed, but not surprised. Anti-choice extremists will never stop their fight to take away a woman's right to choose. And, now the country has an anti-choice President and Congress to enact their agenda.

The appointment of anti-choice Tommy Thompson as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) confirmed George Bush's commitment to overturning FDA approval of Mifeprex. Thompson pledged to review concerns raised by the drug's critics, and reexamine its safety. While the safety and efficacy of the drug have been well established, the Bush administration does have other viable options.

Secretary Thompson could revisit the safety data and declare the drug unsafe because it causes bleeding, cramping, and does not have a lifesaving benefit. In addition, Thompson could take aim at Mifeprex by banning the use of misoprostol, the drug that has to be taken in company with RU-486 in order to end a pregnancy. The FDA approved the use of misoprostol without obtaining approval from the drug's producer, G.D. Searle & Co. This misstep could jeopardize the drug's future. [See

accompanying article on most recent Searle position.]

When the FDA approved Mifeprex, a number of restrictions, such as requiring that only surgical abortion providers be allowed to offer medical abortions and creating a national registry of doctors prescribing the drug, were considered. In the end, the FDA approved the drug with only a limited number of conditions, including regulations requiring women taking the drug to make three doctor's office or clinic visits—once to take Mifeprex, once to take misoprostol, and once to check that the abortion was completed. The FDA could start cracking down on doctors not abiding by the current requirements or even attempt to enact previously considered restrictions.

Already, Sen. Tim Hutchinson and Rep. David Vitter, under the claim that the FDA approval conditions are insufficient and that more restrictions are needed to protect women's health, introduced legislation that would impose a number of the earlier proposed restrictions. President Bush said he would sign the bill into law. While this bill is unnecessary and was not motivated by the need to

ensure women's health, similar bills are popping up in state legislatures around the country.

In fact, despite the Administration's options and Congressional efforts, I believe some of the most potent attacks will occur at the state level.

Similar to previous choice fights, anti-choice grassroots activists are already taking action. Since the FDA's decision, 11 states have introduced legislation to restrict access to Mifeprex.

The anti-choice community opposes abortion—no matter when or how. After just a few months in office, it has become clear that George Bush is their ally, and will work to make the right to choose difficult and inaccessible.

From the poorest women overseas, to those suffering from disease and waiting for the promise of stem cell and fetal tissue research, to women who want to act responsibly when deciding to terminate their pregnancies early—this Administration and this majority in Congress have the power to make the right to choose an empty shell. Rest assured they will use it, and the fight to protect access to Mifeprex has just begun.

Misoprostol Deemed Safe for Abortion

By Fran Snedeker

The drug company Searle has restated its position relating to its product, Cytotec, which is a form of misoprostol, and its potential use as an abortifacient.

The most recent statement essentially gives the green light to doctors to use Cytotec in conjunction with mifepristone (RU-486) to medically induce abortion. This combination of medications, taken under a physician's supervision, has been widely acknowledged as the safest means of inducing abortion non-surgically.

Searle's senior vice president for clinical affairs, Michael A. Friedman, M.D., clarified Searle's current position in the January 10th issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. He undoes the confusion fomented by Searle's issuance of a letter late last year warning against the use of Cytotec for any purpose other than the prevention of gastric ulcers. Searle now says that Cytotec can be used by physicians for "the best interest of their patients" for purposes not covered by FDA approval on the basis of "published research, expert clinical opinion, or their own clinical experience."

Good News! NYS Medicaid Pays for Mifepristone

It was done without fanfare in January 2001. The New York State Department of Health quietly posted an unprecedented document on its website – Medicaid payment rates and standards for medically necessary non-surgical abortions using RU-486. The reimbursement rate schedule was developed following consultation with health care providers. Family Planning Advocates President JoAnn Smith is pleased to note that New York is one of the first states to pay for RU-486 abortions with Medicaid.

Emergency Contraception (EC) Now Available on the Internet

by Fran Snedeker

Emergency Contraception (the "morning-after pill") is now available over the Internet using a credit card payment. Emergency service may be obtained through the VirtualMedicalGroup.com which will charge up to \$79.95 for a "virtual office visit" with a qualified physician plus delivery of the medication [<http://virtualmedicalgroup.com/contraception.html>].

More conventionally, EC is now available through Planned Parenthood as well as women's health centers in college settings, public health facilities, private physicians' offices and emergency rooms of hospitals not affiliated with anti-choice religious institutions. Some will prescribe over the phone and place the necessary call to the patient's pharmacy of choice. Patients may call the EC hotline - 1-888-NOT-2-LATE - for the EC resources closest to them. Costs vary widely from \$8 - \$260, depending on the health care provider and the patient's specific needs.

All these resources will become unnecessary if the FDA responds posi-

<i>Contraception vs. Abortion</i>	
Emergency Contraception Pills (ECPs)	vs. Mifepristone (RU-486)
<i>Morning After pills</i>	<i>Abortion pill</i>
<p>Effect: Prevents unintended pregnancy if taken within 72 hours after unprotected sex.</p> <p>Brand Names: Preven or Plan B.</p> <p>Ingredients: High dose of birth control pills.</p> <p><i>By prescription only at this time in the United States. FDA has been petitioned by AMA and others to make ECPs available without prescription ("over the counter").</i></p>	<p>Effect: Ends pregnancy if taken in first seven to nine weeks.</p> <p>Brand Name: Mifeprex</p> <p>Ingredients: Mifepristone and misoprostol.</p> <p><i>Used only under medical supervision.</i></p>

tively to the petition of major health and advocacy groups to allow pharmacists to provide EC medication over-the-counter. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists as well as the American Medical Association have both taken a stand in favor of making EC available

without a prescription. **Please note: EC is not to be confused with abortion. As detailed in sidebar, EC medication is taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, and prevents pregnancy.**

Violence Round-up

January 2001: Someone fired at least 25 bullets into a Kansas Planned Parenthood women's clinic. Glass was shattered, but no-one was injured. Authorities are investigating the shooting as a violation of the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

February 2001: A Catholic priest who crashed his car into a building housing an abortion clinic and attacked it with an axe pleaded guilty to charges of damaging property. Nobody was injured in the attack. The Rev. John Earl was sentenced to 30 months probation and two days in county jail. Earl was also ordered to undergo counseling and to pay restitution of \$6,664 to the building owners as well as \$1,000 in fines and court costs. Church officials said that Earl was being reassigned.

Greetings From The Muddy Waters Department

We were quite surprised to hear about the Susan B. Anthony List, and gratified to know that it existed, until we did a little research. Here's their goal: they're "dedicated to training pro-life [sic] activists and candidates, advocating the passage of pro-life [sic] legislation in Congress, working to dispel the myths about abortion, and increasing the percentage of pro-life [sic] women in Congress." And they're fund-raising to meet these goals.

I C.A.R.E. Remarks

From remarks delivered by Leslie M. Watson, director of Campaign for Access and Reproductive Equity (C.A.R.E. 2000), at the Family Planning Advocates of NY State 24th Annual Conference, Albany, NY, January 30, 2001.

"I am wondering after all that we have heard and read about this administration and the proposed 'Office of Faith-Based Initiatives,' if the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and Catholics for a Free Choice could apply for funds? What about Equal Partners in Faith, where I sit on the Board, to help address sexism, racism, and sexual orientation one congregation at a time? They faithfully address religious discrimination and oppression.

"Like Family Planning Advocates of New York State, C.A.R.E. 2000 is vested in 'protecting the health of all Americans, especially for the least able,' and more specifically for women. The bottom line is healthy women who are informed, empowered, and deciding for themselves the best alternatives (parenthood, adoption, or abortion), the best form of contraception, the best method of insurance coverage based upon their need. It is also full disclosure of what is covered, and will not be covered, before a crisis, not in the beginning or middle of one.

Please see C.A.R.E. on page 15

Attempts to Restrict Abortion Access Proliferate in Local Legislatures But Usually Not Successfully

By Fran Snedeker

We may have entered a new millennium, but you don't have to look far beyond our state borders to find invidious political activity which would restrict our neighbors' abortion rights. Read this summary and tremble. If we who care about reproductive rights are not constantly vigilant, our legislators in the Empire State might try copycatting any or all of these attacks on our rights.

TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws are finding favor with those who would reduce access to abortion care. In March, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand the South Carolina TRAP laws, which impose medically unnecessary regulations on abortion providers in an effort to make abortion prohibitively expensive or generate excessive paperwork. [See companion article on page 9.] The court's decision has encouraged copycat legislation in ten other states, including our neighbor to the north, Massachusetts.

Victimizing Teenagers— In another example of the antis' willingness to victimize the most vulnerable, the Illinois House is considering legislation which would obligate teenage girls who come from out-of-state to seek abortions in Illinois to tell their parents first if their home state requires such notification. Violators would be subject to imprisonment for up to three years. Medical personnel who provide services to these girls would also face possible jail time.

Parental notification bills have also raised their ugly heads in Hawaii, where the governor has formed an alliance with the right-to-life proponents.

In San Bernardino (CA) County, conservative legislators want to block minors' ability to obtain emergency contraception in county health clinics. When Bill Clinton was in the White House this effort would have been halted in its tracks because the county must obtain a special waiver to stop dispensing EC at clinics receiving federal family planning grants. However...

Vanity Plates Out of Control— Taking a good thing too far, anti-abortion groups in several states are pushing for vanity plates which would bring money into their coffers. In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Ridge (R) is "unlikely to support" a special license plate proposed by a state legislator. The proposed motto, an unfortunate play on the state's former license plate slogan "You've Got a Friend in Pennsylvania," would read "A Friend for Life in Pennsylvania."

Meanwhile in Mississippi state legislators have backed off their proposed legislation authorizing "Choose Life" automobile license plates. Although these plates originally found favor among anti-abortion legislators, fear that these tags would require equivalent pro-choice messages on vehicular plates brought about their rejection.

Efforts to initiate similar anti-choice vanity plates in Louisiana and Florida have inspired lawsuits, which had a chastening effect on Mississippi lawmakers. But in South Carolina, dayglow "Choose Life" license plates are being actively promoted by a group of anti-abortion activists led by the lieutenant governor. They are hoping that the sale of these plates will raise significant funds for "crisis pregnancy centers" run by private, nonprofit anti-choice groups.

Politics and "Partial-Birth" abortion — Federal courts are taking a dim view of most state attempts to prevent doctors from performing procedures which are categorized by politicians as "partial-birth abortions." In early February the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit agreed with a lower court that Rhode Island's "partial-birth" law was unconstitutional. In essence, the court pronounced that the law was excessively vague — not surprising since legislators are unqualified to define the medical condition which constitutes "partial abortion," and experts in the field are unable to agree on the parameters. The Court determined that the Rhode Island law interfered with the constitutional rights of both patients and their doctors.

Maine voters resoundingly rejected a ban on so-called "partial-birth" abortions just last year. That has not discouraged a clique of anti-choice lawmakers from filing two similar bills this year. One of these bills is nearly a carbon copy of the proposal rejected by Maine citizens last year. The other focuses more narrowly on third-trimester abortions, which are exceedingly rare in the state, where 99% of all abortions in 1997 and 1998 were performed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and *none* during the last 12. Fortunately the people of Maine have been wise enough to elect a pro-choice governor who would veto any anti-abortion bill passed by the state legislature.

Life Begins at — Civil wrongful-death suits will include "viable fetuses" if the Arkansas House of Representatives has its way. In early February, legislators voted nearly unanimously (only two courageous nay votes) to permit attempts to "recover damages" for the death of any person or viable fetus. This bill would include in the "wrongful death" definition any "viable" fetus regardless of whether or not the abortion was legal. In Arkansas "viability" starts after the 25th week of pregnancy by state law.

In Virginia, an anti-choice zealot legislator brought to the House of Delegates for the fifth time in five years a bill forcing a woman seeking abortion to wait 24 hours before the procedure can be performed. Once again the House passed the measure, which contains largely the same language as the bill which has failed in the Virginia Senate four times. Unfortunately the Senate has now passed almost identical legislation. Banking on the Governor's support of the bill and his promise to sign it into law, the anti-abortion forces are already claiming victory.

Copycat legislation is pending in Arkansas and Arizona.

Consent to Misinformation — A more invidious form of "informed consent"

Please see Access on page 14

Here Comes The Judge

By Nancy K. Montagnino

Not since the O.J. Simpson trial have Americans focused so much attention on the happenings inside a courtroom. However, in the weeks following the Presidential election, citizens became acutely aware of the fact that judges, not voters, would ultimately decide whether Al Gore or George W. Bush would be sworn in as the 43rd President of the United States.

We know the result. Salon.com ran a headline that said it best: **Supreme Court to democracy: Drop dead.**

When the Supreme Court of the United States stopped the Florida recount, many respected law professors felt the majority – five Justices – acted in a purely partisan way. In early January, the New York Times ran a full page ad, signed by 554 law professors from 120 law schools. “By stopping the vote count in Florida, the U. S. Supreme Court used its power to act as political partisans, not judges of a court of law,” read the ad.

The ad continued:

“We are professors of law at 120 American law schools, from every part of the country, of different political beliefs. But we all agree that when a bare majority of the U.S. Supreme Court halted the recount of ballots under Florida law, the five justices were acting as political proponents for candidate Bush, not as judges.

“It is not the job of a federal court to stop votes from being counted. By stopping the recount in the middle, the five justices acted to suppress the facts. Justice [Antonin] Scalia argued that the justices had to interfere even before the Supreme Court heard the Bush team’s arguments because the recount might ‘cast a cloud upon what [Bush] claims to be the legitimacy of his election....

“By taking power from the voters, the Supreme Court has tarnished its own legitimacy. As teachers whose lives have been dedicated to the rule of law, we protest.”

The politics of the judiciary can best be seen in the embodiment of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Scalia and Clarence Thomas are George W. Bush’s favorite Justices. They are also the two originalists on the Court. Unless

something is unequivocally spelled out in the Constitution, originalists do not consider it to be constitutionally protected. As reported by Aaron Nathans and Steven Elbow in the *The Capital Times*, a Madison, Wisconsin publication, Scalia, during a 45 minute talk at the University of Wisconsin Law School said, amidst laughter: “**A dead Constitution – that’s what I’m selling.**” Scalia called for passage of amendments, not revised interpretations of the Constitution, as a way to change with the times. If a majority wants something, then their elected officials will follow suit. “The majority wins,” Scalia was quoted as saying. “If you don’t believe that, you don’t believe in democracy.” As a Supreme Court Justice, Scalia knows full well that a simple majority does not pass a Constitutional amendment. The usual way is for a two-thirds majority vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, followed by ratification of three-fourths of the States (38 of 50.)

More voters pulled the lever for Al Gore than George Bush. **Considering Scalia wrote the majority decision in Bush v Gore, he knows full well the majority didn’t get the President it wanted.**

Women were given the right to sue attackers in federal court in the Violence Against Women Act. A congressional majority passed a law – Scalia was part of the Supreme Court majority that struck down that portion of the law, contending that Congress overstepped its bounds.

In an article by *Washington Post* staff writer Edward Walsh about the Supreme Court under Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, Steven R. Shapiro, national legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union is quoted as saying “It is still a conservative court that also has become one of the most activist courts in American history.” In that same article, Walter Dellinger, a former solicitor general in the Clinton administration, said the Rehnquist court has invalidated 24 acts of Congress in the past five years.

After serving nearly half a century as a semi-official screening panel for judicial nominees, the American Bar

Association has been told by the White House that the ABA role is over. This action by the Bush administration follows pressure from conservative Republicans to end the ABA’s special role in reviewing competence for judicial appointments.

The politics of the judiciary is especially evident in the nominating process. As reported by Ron Fournier for the Associated Press, Bush, his political advisers including Karl Rove, White House counsel Al Gonzales, and Attorney General John Ashcroft are quickly reviewing potential judicial nominees. While the Senate is in Republican hands, Bush & Co. wants to push through as many conservative judicial nominees as possible; there are nearly 100 judicial vacancies on the federal bench. Although Bush has vowed not to use a litmus test on abortion, he has also vowed to nominate lawyers who are strict constructionists, thus all but ruling out pro-choice contenders.

Access, from page 13

law has emerged in several states including Missouri, Kansas, and Louisiana. Here, women seeking an abortion are forced to wait an extra 24 hours in order to be “educated” about the supposed links between abortion and breast cancer. These laws are pressed by lawmakers who claim to be “concerned with women’s health” even though the scientific credibility of such a connection is negligible at best. They manage to ignore the fact that no other medical procedure requires waiting periods for consent.

And for the tenth year in a row, we monitor the passage of a Georgia “right to know” bill which has landed in the legislative dustpan every year. This bill seeks to force-feed women seeking an abortion with exaggerated descriptions of the “risks of abortion,” coupled with misinformation about fetal development and glorification of the alternatives to abortion.

Protect the
right to choose!

"Further, because our focus groups cross all racial, economic, and geographic identities, coalition partners must address issues from Medicaid and other forms of private insurance, access to abortion, the impact of hospital mergers, reproductive technology such as RU-486 and emergency contraception, illegitimacy state bonus programs, family caps and child exclusion policies, abstinence-only education, teen pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

"Who are you? Who am I? I am an active member of the community of faith, a woman of color, an American of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin/South/North/American, European ancestry who has experienced oppression based upon my race, class, ethnicity, and gender. One who has taken that experience as a part of my testimony, my journey, my victories.

"I am an enfranchised Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green Party, Other voter; a disenfranchised citizen of these United States who prays to Jesus, Allah, Jehovah, the ancestors, Mother Earth, the Creator, Father, in churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, at my bedside. And I am fully, comfortably, quietly, radically, visibly, privately, without apology, pro-health care, pro-welfare affirm, pro-choice.

"I am mentally and physically abled, or mentally and physically challenged wearing hair short, long, straight, kinky, nappy, curled, locked, dyed, braided, extended, permed, with high collars, low collars, form-fitting or ill-fitting dresses, skirts, suits, pants, jeans, with much behind, no behind, legs, thighs, hips, breasts, cheeks, broad nose, narrow nose, lips thin or thick painted black/pink/red, brown skin, red-yellow-white skin that is soft. I am strong and weak and I laugh loudly or softly, cry, have joys, sorrows, convictions, confusions, and yes, contradictions.

"But if you are not standing with me in the fight, struggle, necessity, the things I have named, for abortion rights and reproductive freedom in your living room, classroom, or boardroom, then you are standing against me.

"Therefore what you need to know about who I am, and maybe who you are, is that I am one who is sick and tired of being denied, taunted, challenged, and dismissed. I am one who is demanding reproductive respect and dignity in health care, sexuality education, and welfare reform. More important, I am, and you are, not alone!

Dear Friend of Choice:

It is my job to ask you to contribute your hard-earned dollars to WCLA. This is a new job for me. In accepting this challenge I had to answer certain questions for myself, most formidable of which was, "Why contribute to WCLA instead of another organization?"

The answer was easy. George W. Bush has made it clear that choice is his target. He has stated: "I will do everything in my power to restrict abortions." With that he threw down the gauntlet.

WCLA has a phenomenal track record. Since our inception we have targeted political campaigns throughout Westchester County. When we started, ten of 12 state legislators voted to make abortion a crime; today, ten of 12 are pro-choice. County legislators followed the same pattern. Of the 17 members of the County Board, 12 used to be anti-choice; now 15 are pro-choice. The pattern repeats itself with our Congressional delegation which once was dominated by anti-choice representatives. Today three of the four representatives from Westchester County are pro-choice.

Choice is in real danger. It is being assaulted on the federal and state level. We must support elected officials who are committed to choice. In order to do that we need your help.

As we turn to you for financial support it is important that you understand: 1. There is no other pro-choice organization in Westchester that focuses its energies on your rights. We telephone, we mail, we lobby, we stay on top of the key issues; 2. We keep you informed on choice issues locally and nationally; 3. We monitor each elected official from Westchester County. We work with each one to help them understand the importance and the meaning of pro-choice votes.

WCLA will continue to mail you the three newsletters we publish every year plus our Voters' Guide whether or not you decide to make a contribution. But, given the present political climate, our task has never been more challenging. Your contribution - large or small - will really be appreciated.

Yours for choice,

Catherine Lederer-Plaskett
Chair, WCLA Board

We will not surrender to the Bush anti-choice agenda.

Therefore, I will contribute to WCLA: \$35 \$50 \$100 \$150 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other \$ _____

Visa, MC, AmEx _____ Expires _____ Signed _____

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

City/Zip _____

Political Party _____ Phone _____

- I will volunteer for WCLA. Send me a form.
- I will contact my legislators when notified. By e-mail.
- I will do phoning.
- I won't vote for candidates who would restrict abortion.

Checks are payable to WCLA. Mail with this coupon to 237 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains, NY 10605. Contributions to WCLA are not tax deductible. To phone in a charge, please call (914) 946-5363.

Lest We Forget . . .

By "Jim"

From "The Worst of Times," edited by Patricia G. Miller

"...I grew up sort of estranged and lonely. I very much wanted someone to love me and think I was special, but I didn't know how to get close to people. Every time I tried I got hurt, so maybe, on a subconscious level at least, I just quit trying. I guess I'm still not very good at relationships. I was married, but now I am divorced...."

"I was eighteen when I first found out that my mom died from a back-alley abortion. I've had lots of prob-

lems with ulcers. I always thought – I was probably told – that our mom died from the complications of ulcers...."

"It seems like after my mom died my life fell apart and never got back on track. It even carries over into the next generation....I'm what you would call anti-abortion or pro-life. I've been taught that abortion is wrong, and I guess I believe it, but part of me says that what happened to my mother wasn't right. She shouldn't have died. I guess I don't mind the abortion. I mind losing her.

I've never gotten over it and I never will."

This story differs from the usual entries in this space. We think it is worth noting that, as we know, even the simplistic black and white attitudes of those who profess to be "pro-life" can be profoundly altered by their personal experiences. This is our question to this writer – and those who share his point of view: Why aren't you working to insure access to safe and legal abortions for all women?

School Board Alert

The change of administration in Washington has brought the possibility of actions on the local front that need to be monitored by pro-choice voters.

Despite a decision of the United States Supreme Court (*Edwards v Aguillard*, 1987), which found the mandated teaching of creationism alongside evolution to be unconstitutional, the issue nonetheless was raised in the Presidential election of 2000. During the campaign candidate George W. Bush was quoted as endorsing the teaching of both. Now President Bush is proposing faith-based federal funding of social programs under the control of local clergy and has a history of support for school vouchers. The issue, however, goes well beyond creationism vs. evolution.

Since local school boards will be given greater flexibility to control curriculum in the schools, voters must carefully study the school board candidates, budgets, and proposals. The religious right endorses abstinence only, as compared to comprehensive sex education.

A recent documentary, "Live Free or Die," focused on Dr. Wayne Goldner, an obstetrician-gynecologist who performs abortions in addition to delivering babies. He was dismissed from his job at a local middle school where he was teaching a course in abstinence-based sex education. School officials caved in to pressure from Right to Lifers who picketed the school protesting Goldner's presence.

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