

Great News Out of Albany

The *Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act* (A116) (S3661) passed the Assembly AND the Senate! This bill allows EC to be distributed by pharmacies and registered nurses through non-specific prescriptions. A great deal of credit for this bill goes to pro-choice advocates **Assemblywoman Amy Paulin**, who first sponsored it in the Assembly in 2001, and to **Senator Nicholas Spano** who, as

the bill's new sponsor, guided the bill through the Senate. On Wednesday, June 22, 2005, *The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act* passed in the Senate with a vote of 34-27-1. It was a true bi-partisan effort. Thank you, Amy and Nick!

Before the bill can become law it must be signed by Governor Pataki. It is uncertain whether he will sign or veto it.

The Peace on Capitol Hill

By Catherine Lederer-Plaskett

On May 23, 2004, a group of self-proclaimed moderates (seven Senate Democrats and seven Senate Republicans) announced that a compromise on the so-called *nuclear option* had been reached. The seven Democratic senators agreed that they would support a filibuster only under "extraordinary" circumstances and that they would not allow a filibuster for five of the seven extremist nominees under consideration. In exchange, the seven Republican senators agreed not to vote for the *nuclear option*.

While many on Capitol Hill cheered that the *nuclear option* had been avoided, most advocacy groups felt the compromise was little more than a win for the ultra-conservative right wing.

The Prelude to the Compromise

During his speech on the opening day of the 109th Congress, Majority Leader Senator Bill Frist set the tone for George W. Bush's second term. He claimed, "Democratic obstruction of the President's nominations is unprecedented." Frist threatened the *nuclear option* if Democrats again used the constitutionally guaranteed right to filibuster to block any of Bush's judicial nominations.

In fact, there is nothing *unprecedented* about use of the filibuster. It has been used throughout the history of the Senate. Republicans used it with varying degrees of success during the Clinton administration.

Further, the Democrats have, in no way, impeded President Bush from successfully appointing a large number of ultra-conservative judges. During Bush's first term, the Senate approved 204 out of the 214 nominations that came to the floor. Those numbers stand in sharp contrast to the last four years of President Clinton's presidency when only 175 nominees were confirmed and 55 were blocked, including 20 circuit court nominees. Many of those nominees never even received a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.

Nuclear Option

Frist's *nuclear option* is an all-out attack on the US Constitution and the 217-year-old constitutional right to filibuster. It is a vote that would potentially result in prohibiting the use of the filibuster for judicial nominations, and thus fundamentally change the checks and balance system created to protect against tyranny and dictatorial rule. Former Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch and Majority Leader

No Child Left Informed

By Concetta Erica Agro

■ Eighty percent (80%) of the abstinence-only curricula...contain false, misleading or distorted information about reproductive health. ... Eleven of the thirteen curricula most commonly used by (federal) programs contain major errors and distortions of public health information." Those were some of the conclusions reached by a December 2004 Congressional report, conducted at the behest of the House of Representatives' Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), which examined federally funded abstinence-only programs.

Congressman Waxman's alarming findings brought to light the lack of oversight that federally funded abstinence-only programs receive. The report highlights that, "the federal government does not review or approve the accuracy of the information presented in abstinence-only programs." Applicants for these federally funded grants are simply required to submit a general outline or summary of the curriculum to be used.

The Cost

The federal government has more than doubled its expenditures on

See Peace on page 4

See Child on page 8

The War of the Words

By Catherine Lederer-Plaskett
President/Chair of the Board

On Friday, just after hearing that Sandra Day O'Connor had announced her resignation, I again realized how little pleasure there is in the phrase, "I told you so." As a parent, you know it means you warned someone—usually your child—not to do something, that he or she did it anyway, and the result was negative. Who really wants to be "right" when the ramifications are damaging?

As an advocate for choice and a politically engaged individual, I spoke to many people in 2000 and over the next four years about Bush's adverse impact, actual and potential, on women's reproductive rights. Those who were pro-choice but wanted to vote for Bush replied simply, "He wouldn't do that." By "that" they meant overturn or jeopardize Roe. Let's hope they're right, but given Bush's last four years of nominations and appointments, they're betting on a long shot.

I personally am not a gambler. I am, however, what I consider to be an optimistic, politically astute, dedicated, and caring person—and, yes, moral.

But what is *moral*? After all, the US press was in general agreement that morality, and thus being moral, was credited as the deciding issue in 2004. Bush voters supposedly cited morality as the determining factor in their vote.

According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, *moral* means: **1a**: of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior: ethical **b**: expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior **c**: sanctioned by or operative on one's conscience or ethical judgment.

I think that's me. Every year I dress about 75 kids in



new back-to-school clothes by working to coordinate corporate contributions with the neediest kids in my school district. Of course, I don't do it alone. I do it through a program called Back-to-School-Clothes for Kids organized by an amazing woman named Connie Kennedy. With her help, I help kids in my district and congregants at surrounding churches who would not otherwise benefit from this program. I would estimate I've done my part to dress about 1,000 kids so far. That doesn't make me great—I do it because I can and there's an unquestionable need.

I've spent years hauling food from schools and distributing it to families. I've run free stores so those in need could benefit from that which those who have don't need. I do many things for people, animals and the environment. Others in my office have similar track records.

I was so confused by this issue of "morality" that I found myself looking to the Ten Commandments. Was there something inherent there I was missing? I can honestly say I abide by them. I confess though that I abide by and insist that my children respect the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain" primarily out of respect for others we may offend by using the Lord's name callously. I live by the Commandments not because they are The Commandments but because the rules make sense: Should I sleep with my neighbor's husband? Steal? Treat others differently than I wish to be treated? I live by those rules and others, not because I fear God, but because of a personal code of ethics.

Every morning my children are held to the highest standards a person can be asked to live by: to be the very best they can be. Why is that so hard? Because they know when they're cheating. It speaks to motivation and intent. They know when their motives are not good; they know when they may not have been completely truthful. The Ethical Culture Society strives to implant the same barometer in its members, asking them to judge their own actions by a personal sense of right and wrong. Learning to be one's own judge is the hardest task to accomplish and live by.

The word *moral* is but five letters. However, he/she who controls the vocabulary controls politics. When we changed our name to WCLA—Choice Matters, we received a mailing discussing the power of the word *choice* versus the word *life*. (*Choice* lost.) Today's political focus is on words that create emotional reactions in the hearts and minds of the American public. The term "partial birth abortion" was coined because of its power to create a horrific visual image; in reality, there's no such procedure. The power play of the century was when anti-choicers took ownership of the phrase "pro-life." It's ludicrous! I'm pro-life.

The key is not to give an inch! Yes, for me *morality* was the deciding issue in the 2004, and that's why I voted for Kerry.

Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion —Choice Matters, Inc. © 2005

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Sleeper Cells

The real sleeper cells in the fight for reproductive rights are the Robert Astorinos of the world. Astorino epitomizes the diligence and focus of the extreme right. As was clear in the 2004 elections, the right wing has been carefully breeding its candidates, introducing them first at the school board level and then promoting them through the ranks.

Robert Astorino was first a Mount Pleasant school board member, then a Mount Pleasant Town Board Councilman, a first term County Legislator (CBL 3) in 2003, and now he is running for the office of Westchester County Executive. He says, according to *The Journal News*, that he is anti-choice, "but that the issue has little to do with the operation of county government." How right-wing of him!!!

Reproductive rights have everything to do with county government and choice always matters, on all levels of elected office. School boards decide which programs to offer: abstinence-only or comprehensive sex education. Town governments influence the direction of police departments and the expenditure of tax dollars: protect access to clinics or apprehend jay-walkers. On a county wide level, the impact is profound. (See Page 10)

The Bob Astorinos of local politics know this but they do not want you, the voter, to focus on these facts. These are the years to build name recognition and electability—to be the great guy next door. Astorino is clearly positioning himself for the day that an elected official like Sue Kelly retires.

Astorino is not unique; he exists on both sides of the aisle. This is the year of town and village elections, and the voter must be astute. Just because someone belongs to the Democratic Party does not mean that that candidate is unequivocally pro-choice. Greenburgh is a perfect example of this situation. The Town is overwhelmingly Democratic and thus town elections are actually decided on Primary Day in September. Although the Greenburgh supervisor is a Democrat, this year he is not the Party's endorsed candidate. He has chosen two candidates to run with him for town council seats who are not pro-choice. They believe in a woman's right to choose but only with restrictions. They waffle when asked for details on their positions. That is NOT *Roe v. Wade*. These candidates are sleeper cells. Elect them and you position them for higher office.

There are no off-year elections and there are no elected offices that do not affect women. All elections are of the utmost importance, especially now. As Democrats elected to federal office set the example by supporting anti-choice Democrats like Bob Casey Jr. in Pennsylvania, local officials also expect a free ride for supporting anti-choice local candidates. The only answer is, "No Way, No Where, No How!"

Choice is not a single vote. It is a philosophy that must be applied by our elected officials whenever they cast a vote or support a candidate. Choice must be considered whether the vote is for an appointment to the U.S. District Court, budget allocations to family planning, UNFPA, or on legislation entitled "Unborn Victims." Choice must always be considered. After all, for the anti-choicers, it's always *the* consideration.

Her Vote Definitely Counted!

US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor announced her retirement on July 1, 2005, after almost 25 years of service. She was the first woman to serve on the US Supreme Court, and the deciding vote—the fifth vote—in key cases on abortion rights, affirmative action, and others. She began her career on the High Court as a conservative and evolved into a "centrist-oriented conservative." Although many say her announcement came as a surprise, others discussed it as a serious possibility at the commencement of President Bush's first term. Rumor had it that O'Connor had voted against a recount in Florida because she did not want to retire under Gore. When she did not retire during GW's first term, it was speculated that she too was horrified by Bush's extremist positions and preferred to wait until the 2004 presidential elections. (Clearly the options are no better now.)

This particular Supreme Court retirement can be considered the most critical event to occur in a lifetime. As THE deciding vote—the swing vote, she single-handedly decided the outcome of many cases. Conservatives and progressives alike are not fans of all of her votes. She is recognized as a states' rights advocate who realized there was definitely a need and a place for federal controls. Many concur with her husband's description of O'Connor as the most powerful person in America. O'Connor was clearly that for women's reproductive rights.

As the *Daily News* wrote on July 2, 2005, "Abortion front & center: Woman's right to choose key to upcoming justice war." O'Connor was *the* vote in decid-

See O'Connor on Page 5

Senator Bill Frist have repeatedly threatened to call for the vote if Democrats do not heed their demand regarding judicial nominations.

Filibuster

The right to filibuster was included in the US Constitution as a part of the checks and balance system upon which the United States government was founded. George Will explained, "The filibuster is an important defense of minority rights, enabling democratic government to measure and respect not merely numbers but also intensity in public controversies. Filibusters enable intense minorities to slow the government juggernaut." (*The Nuclear Option* by Ralph G. Neas, 2/9/05, Peace and Justice Center.) The filibuster plays an essential role in ensuring the necessary fairness of the judicial branch.

To curb extremism and to force compromise, the Senate rules state that 60 votes are necessary to end a filibuster. This rule was intended to serve as a check on the whims of the majority. If the right to filibuster judicial nominations is eliminated, a precedent could be set to change the filibuster law for any issue if the party in the majority so desires.

Secret Agendas and Staged Rantings

To promote Bush's nominees, conservative extremists—including the Majority Leader—have chosen to disregard another principle upon which this country was founded: the separation of church and state. Senator Frist appeared with prominent Christian conservatives in a telecast, billed as *Justice Sunday*, that portrayed Democrats as "against people of faith" for blocking the nominations. Organized by the Family Research Council and broadcast from a megachurch in Kentucky, the program reached hundreds of thousands of people.

Other staunch conservative Republicans have attacked the judiciary itself. Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson stated that the threat posed by liberal judges is "probably more serious than a few bearded terrorists who fly into buildings." He also stated that the judges were more dangerous to Americans than the Civil War or the Nazis.

At a conference in Washington entitled "Confronting the Judicial War on Faith," House Majority Leader Tom DeLay said that the federal courts had "run amok." He criticized Congress, saying that it must reassert its authority over the courts. Conference organizers and congressional staff members called for steps to: 1. Impeach judges considered to have ignored the will of Congress or to have followed foreign law; 2. Pass bills that would remove certain issues from court jurisdiction including the place of God in public life; 3. Change the Senate filibuster rule; and 4. Use Congressional authority over court budgets to punish judges who were deemed to have overstepped their authority.

Holding All the Cards

The compromise reached in May seems to have been a win for Republicans and a delay of the inevitable for Democrats. As of June 10th, five of the 10 judicial nominees previously filibustered by Senate Democrats had been confirmed by the Senate. That leaves only two of the original 10, because three nominees

have withdrawn their names from consideration.

The federal appellate courts upon which these five justices will serve wield enormous power in deciding cases on a wide variety of constitutional issues such as the right to privacy or what constitutes an undue burden on a woman's right to an abortion. The Circuit Courts of Appeals decide almost 30,000 cases a year, as compared to the small number of cases (less than 100) that make it all the way to the Supreme Court. Therefore, a federal Circuit Court of Appeal is, in most cases, the court of last resort and its decisions are as binding in their particular circuit as any Supreme Court decision.

The New Judges

All five of the newly confirmed candidates will now serve lifetime appointments on the Circuit Courts of Appeals. Three of the five—Janice R. Brown, Priscilla R. Owen, and William H. Pryor Jr.—have extremist records.

Janice R. Brown was known as the "most conservative justice" on the California Supreme Court. According to Americans United for Separation of Church and State, she "has attacked the wall of separation of church and state as 'an uninformative metaphor.'" She is staunchly conservative on issues such as affirmative action, women's reproductive rights (including *Roe v. Wade*) and property rights. In 1996, the California State Supreme Court found Brown unfit to serve, saying that, "in the 18 months on a lower court bench she had improperly injected her political philosophy into her opinions, in substance and in language." (*The New York Times*, May 18, 2005)

Priscilla R. Owen, in the words of Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, the senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, is a "judicial activist ... (whose) record shows a bias in favor of government secrecy and business interests, and against the environment, victims of discrimination and medical malpractice." Owen has opposed a woman's right to choose in at least 13 cases involving the ability of pregnant minors to obtain an abortion even when a judge found them mature enough to make their own decision. As one of the two most extreme members of the very conservative Texas Supreme Court, Owen voted to throw out jury verdicts that held big business accountable for abuses; she frequently opposed decisions that upheld protections against discrimination, sexual harassment, and other workplace abuses. While on the Texas Supreme Court, US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales criticized or joined other justices' criticism of positions taken by Owen in numerous cases, including one abortion case for what he deemed an "unconscionable act of judicial activism."

William H. Pryor is the first Bush judicial nomination to elicit opposition votes from Bush's own party. Although confirmed by a 53-to-45 vote, three Republicans joined Democrats to oppose Pryor's nomination. Pryor is renowned for his extremist agenda. Referred to as a "right-wing zealot" by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Judge Pryor believes that the Constitution does not apply to many individual rights and freedom issues, including reproductive choice, gay rights, and school prayer. He believes that these matters should be decided by the states and decided by majority vote, even if constitu-

See Peace on page 5

ing key cases that upheld the basic principle of Roe v. Wade. Her deciding vote determined the outcome of cases such as the 1992 Planned Parenthood v. Casey which granted states a lot of (too much!) control over access to abortion but, nonetheless, upheld the basic premise of a woman's right to choose; and the 2000 Steinberg v. Carhart which struck down Nebraska's ban on so-called partial birth abortion because there were no exemptions for a woman's health and safety.

In her resignation, O'Connor wrote that she will serve until a new justice is confirmed—not nominated but confirmed. With those words, she acknowledged that this is potentially a long road. According to reports, President Bush has a list of extreme conservatives he is considering for this position. Dr. Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, warned, "For President Bush, social conservatives, and the senators they helped elect, the moment of truth has arrived."

That's correct. The moment of reckoning has dawned. Senators on both sides of the aisle must confirm or reject a nomination. Perhaps extremist senators will implement the *nuclear option*. It is essential that pro-choice constituents of all parties exert pressure on their respective senators. As many call for a nominee who would be a consensus builder, ideologically and judicially close to O'Connor, others say, "No." Carol Tobias of the National Right to Life Committee said that, "Justice O'Connor has not been good for unborn children, so we do see any change as being positive." Trust that Carol Tobias isn't sitting quietly at home. She is pressuring Washington TODAY.

It's important to remind Washington of 1994 when Republicans overwhelmingly won elections. Let candidates of all parties beware: 1994 can happen to any party. Undoubtedly, senators are weighing the potential consequences of their actions. Anti-choicers are far louder but, as studies show, far less numerous.

The pro-choice community—those who believe women are capable, intelligent individuals able to make informed decisions for and about themselves and their futures—**must** take note of which elected officials vote for women's rights and which do not, supporting **only** those candidates in all elections and nominations who truly and completely trust women to make decisions about their own bodies.

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your e-mail address!**

tional rights are violated. Pryor called Roe v. Wade "the worst abomination in the history of constitutional law." Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) said Pryor "has argued that the federal courts should cut back on the protections of important and well-supported federal laws including the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans With Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Clean Water Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act." Leahy pointed out that, "He has repudiated decades of legal precedents that permitted individuals to sue states to prevent violations of federal civil rights regulations."

As Brown is 56, Owen 50, and Pryor 43, one can expect that they will be making judicial decisions and setting precedent for at least the next 20 years. These judges clearly fit into Bush's plan to imprint a conservative agenda on the United States judicial system.

Searching for the Compromise

Senate Democrats who view the so-called compromise reached on May 23rd as a positive step place their hopes in the language of the deal which says that the seven Democrats would filibuster future judicial nominees only under "extraordinary" circumstances. Apparently they no longer felt that Brown, Owen, or Pryor constituted "extraordinary" circumstances.

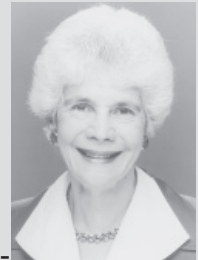
Democrats say they retained the right to filibuster with an eye to US Supreme Court nominations. Sandra Day O'Connor's resignation will show whether the compromise was a worthwhile gamble. Following her resignation, one of the self-proclaimed moderates, Republican Senator John Warner, said, "The nuclear option is definitely on the table."

The fear now is that because most cases are decided in the eleven Circuit Courts of Appeals and Bush is masterfully nominating right-wing ideologues to all levels of the federal judiciary, this compromise may be comparable to closing the barn door after the cow has left.

In Memoriam:

The Hon. Audrey Hochberg

WCLA—Choice Matters mourns the loss of a truly great advocate of women's reproductive rights. Audrey Hochberg dedicated her political and private life to ensuring that all women—regardless of their race, class, status, geography, or ability to pay, had full, unimpeded access to reproductive health care. Her focused and measured style was invaluable here and in Albany. She will be missed.



these programs in the last four years. Further, the requirement that states must match federal funds for abstinence-only programs has caused many states to alter their spending practices. Dollars that were previously used to support comprehensive, medically accurate, sexuality education, which included but were not limited to abstinence education, have been rerouted to abstinence-only programs.

This spending increase has multiplied the number of adolescents now receiving abstinence-only as their sole source of formalized education about contraception and sexual health.

Abstinence-only education programs dictate not having sexual intercourse as the only way to reduce the risks of pregnancy, disease, and other possible consequences of sex. Federal requirements prohibit these programs from including any accurate information about contraception or about the prevention and detection of STIs (sexually transmitted infections). Contraceptives are only mentioned when trying to convince teens to avoid them. To achieve that end, these programs misrepresent the failure rate of contraceptives. The curricula never identify oral and anal sex as intercourse, nor do they address that these types of activity entail risk. Studies show these programs have no impact on actually preventing pregnancies or decreasing the risk of contracting an STI.

Egregious Errors

The most commonly used curricula cite the ineffectiveness of condoms to prevent transmission of HIV, STIs and pregnancy. The source of this misinformation is a scientific study that has been discredited by federal health officials and scientific consensus. Some of the curricula also contain blatant scientific errors. One curriculum labels sweat and tears as fluids that transmit HIV, even though the scientific community dispelled this myth more than 10 years ago.

They also present wrong or misleading information about the physical and psychological effects of legal abortion. They falsely state that sterility, premature birth leading to retardation, tubal and cervical pregnancies, and suicide are some of the possible effects of abortion.

The Silver Ring Thing

Some curricula use religious teachings, which is in direct violation of federal funding rules. A component of many programs is abstinence or "virginity pledges." Students vow, sometimes to God, not to have "sex."

On May 16, 2005, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) took exception to such a curriculum by taking legal action against the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The ACLU charged that the HHS has illegally used tax dollars to fund an abstinence-only program, the Silver Ring Thing (SRT), that promotes Christianity. As part of the Bush administration's expansion of abstinence-only education, SRT has received more than one million dollars since 2003. The program consists of a three-hour presentation followed by secular and religious group meetings. The ACLU charges that students are encouraged to choose the religious groups and to sign up for Bible-based programs.

Guidelines for HHS abstinence-only funding clearly state that recipients affiliated with religious groups may receive funds; however, they are prohibited from using that money for religious purposes.

A major crisis is occurring because abstinence-only programs fail to define "sex" or advocate the use of condoms. These failings have caused a rapid rise in unprotected high-risk sexual behavior among virginity-pledgers. Pledgers who identified themselves as virgins were six times more likely to have had oral sex; male pledgers were four times more likely to have had anal sex as their non-pledging counterparts.

Pledgers have STI rates as high as non-pledgers. However, they are less likely to detect or seek medical treatment for their infections, increasing the danger of transmission.

Lubbock, Texas

A community that highlights the severity of this problem is Lubbock County in Texas. In 1995, then-governor George W. Bush signed a law requiring Texas public schools to teach abstinence sex education. Texas became the third state with mandated abstinence sex education.

Prior to 1995, Lubbock had a high rate of teen pregnancies. In 1995 the community launched an abstinence-only offensive, complete with virginity pledges. Now, Lubbock County's teen pregnancy rate is the highest in Texas by almost 10%. It also has the highest rate of STIs. As reported by UNESCO, *Texas Teaches Abstinence, With Mixed Grades*, "as rates for gonorrhea and chlamydia have fallen nationally, Lubbock County has confronted an epidemic."

Much to their credit, it is the teenagers who are shining a light on the failures of their parents, educators and community leaders. A movie released this year titled *The Education of Shelby Knox* focuses on the true life story of a devout Christian teenager, Shelby Knox, who pledged abstinence until marriage but then became a strong and vocal advocate for comprehensive sex education. She is not alone in Lubbock. Other teens have given voice to the need to bring comprehensive sex education to the classroom through their work on the Lubbock Youth Commission.

Lubbock County is but one example of these federally funded programs being used as a vehicle for this administration to promote its extreme ideology. The actual cost of these programs will be measured over time by the financial burden forced on society by the ramifications of abstinence-only education.

**Protect Your Rights!
VOTE!!!**

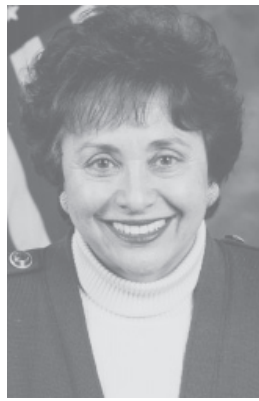
The Dangers of CIANA

By Representative Nita M. Lowey

Recently, the House of Representatives passed the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, or CIANA. This legislation is similar to parental notification laws debated by previous Congresses, with one exception: under this bill you get two crimes for the price of one.

CIANA would not only make a felon out of anyone — a step-parent, grandparent, aunt, or clergy member—who accompanies a young woman across state lines for an abortion, it would make a felon out of any doctor who performs an abortion on a minor from another state without having first obtained parental consent *in person* and abided by a 24 hour waiting period.

This is a terribly misguided bill that has the potential to isolate vulnerable young women and put doctors in the



unthinkable position of having to decipher onerous state and federal law before practicing good medicine.

Equally troubling as the passage of this bill was an egregious act that took place during its consideration. In an official record, the Republican majority categorized Democratic amendments meant to exempt loved ones from criminal prosecution under this bill as an attempt to exempt sex offenders.

This was not only a gross abuse of power, it was simply not honest.

Members of Congress and the American public will always have different views and even deep disagreements about the important issues we face. We should use the power of debate to resolve those differences—not to mischaracterize the views and intentions of our opponents.

I firmly believe that we should make abortion less necessary for teenagers, not more dangerous and difficult. We need to teach teenagers to be abstinent and responsible. We need a comprehensive approach to help teenagers remain safe and healthy regardless of their choices. These are goals all of us — parents and grandparents, neighbors and friends — can work toward together.

New York: Moving in the Correct Direction

Pro-choice advocates have been working tirelessly to educate everyone, from elected officials to candidates to the public at large, about emergency contraception (EC), and it is finally beginning to pay off.

FYI

EC is **NOT** an abortion. It is a form of birth control that works best at significantly reducing the risk of pregnancy (89%) if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sexual intercourse, but can be taken up to 120 hours afterwards. It works by interrupting ovulation, preventing fertilization of an egg or stopping an egg from implanting in the uterus.

EC is available without a prescription in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico, and Washington. It is also available over-the-counter in Canada and some European countries. (New York State may very well be next if Governor Pataki signs *The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act* passed by the Senate on June 22, 2005!)

EC without a prescription would be a win for everyone. Because the number of unintended pregnancies would decrease dramatically, the abortion rate would also go down significantly. According to a report released by NYS Comptroller Alan Hevesi in November 2003, easier access to EC in New York State would result in

122,000 fewer unintended pregnancies and 82,000 fewer abortions, *annually*, with a savings of approximately \$452 million per year in health care spending in New York State alone.

New York City

On April 21, New York City Mayor Bloomberg announced a \$3 million dollar initiative to expand access to emergency contraception (EC) and family planning, and to improve maternal and infant health. The thrust of the project is education. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will spend \$1 million on a campaign to increase awareness of EC. Officials will visit pharmacists

in neighborhoods with high rates of unintended pregnancy to educate pharmacists about EC, and to encourage them to stock it, and provide information about EC to their patients. Specialists will also conduct one-on-one visits with primary care providers to supply tools, resources and materials about EC and other birth control options. In addition, New York City Health and Hospital Corporation facilities will begin offering advance prescriptions for EC to women to ensure that they have access to the medication even when doctors' offices are closed. Materials about EC and other forms of birth control will be printed in English, Spanish and Chinese.

The Healthy Teens Act

There is the promise of great news out of Albany in the form of the *Healthy Teens Act* (A6619, S5121). This legislation, which was sponsored by Congressman Richard Gottfried, has just passed in the Assembly. Now it must pass in the Senate where it is sponsored Senator Nicholas Spano.

The focus of this proposed legislation is on the word *healthy!*

Through a competitive grant process funded through the Department of Health, school districts, BOCES, school-based health centers and community-based organizations can apply for grants to develop and implement programs that provide comprehensive sex education to young people. Thanks to Family Planning Advocates' hard work, a strong, diverse coalition has been built to support the bill. The key to its future success is its broad appeal. This proposed legislation will en-

See Teens on page 10

Terri Schiavo's Death and Anti-Choice Rhetoric

Terri Schiavo died on March 31, 2005, her feeding tube disconnected by a judge's decision (at the request of her husband Michael Schiavo) who was satisfied that Terri Schiavo would not have wanted to continue living in the persistent vegetative state she had been in for 15 years. Since her death, an autopsy has proven that she had indeed suffered severe brain damage and was blind.

What would have and should have been a sad and private time for a family became a national spectacle and a vehicle for extremist anti-choice forces. Right to Life [*sic*] leaders used this case to engage their supporters and push the view that this was just one more example of secular liberals promoting a "culture of death." Randall Terry, founder of the militant anti-choice Operation Rescue, was asked to coordinate the efforts to "rescue Terri from the clutches of death by judicial homicide."

Together with Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, Terry represented Terri Schiavo's parents and opposed the removal of her feeding tube. As in their heyday, Pavone and Randall Terry cranked up the rhetoric in typical anti-choice fashion, calling this a "killing," and sparked a national debate on euthanasia, persistent vegetative states, and guardianships. Disregarding extensive medical evidence, followers claimed that Terri Schiavo was merely disabled, and not in a persistent vegetative state for 15 years, and that she could have recovered with appropriate therapy.

The case was adjudicated by Florida Circuit Court Judge George Greer, who is himself a Conservative Republican and devout Christian. The decision was appealed to the highest courts in Florida and the U.S. All judicial appeals failed.

Perhaps in response, Terry has announced that he plans to run for the Florida State Senate.

With the help of Pavone and Terry, this case brought together a mixed bag of individuals who had strong and different feelings about Terri Schiavo, hospice, disability rights, stem cell research, assisted fertility, and abortion. (Visit [www.terrisjustice@yahoo.com](mailto:terrisjustice@yahoo.com) or www.blogsforterri.com to see the passionate fear and hatred used to frame the debate.) Passions ran high. Judge Greer and Michael Schiavo have received death threats.

This hysteria should be viewed against the backdrop of Olympic-abortion clinic-gay nightclub bomber Eric Rudolph's written statement offering motive for his attacks. "The purpose of the attack on July 27th (1996) was to confound, anger and embarrass the Washington government in the eyes of the world for its abominable sanctioning of abortion on demand." The words and actions of Pavone, Terry,

and Rudolph incite violence.

Although this sounds familiar to pro-choice advocates because it is the same emotion thrown against pro-choice advocates since *Roe v. Wade*, there is one huge difference. Today's Republican-controlled Congress and White House appear to condone this attitude through their own actions. Congress sets, by example, the tone for tolerance and respect that this nation expects of its people. As with its failure (or refusal) to pass anti-

lynching legislation for more than 60 years, Congress implied racism and vigilante violence would be tolerated. By trying to actively involve itself in the Schiavo case, Congress was encouraging the actions of these extremists.

What is Congress saying today when, on almost a daily basis, it cuts funding for children's health and education programs while passing anti-reproductive rights legislation AND, simultaneously, making it increasingly difficult for women to obtain birth control? George W. Bush once pledged, "I will do anything in my power to restrict abortion." His actions seem to be bearing that out.

There is much about which to be concerned.



Send Us Your E-mail Address

It is the most efficient way for us to contact you about important news & events that affect pro-choice voters. You can be pro-active in less than five minutes. Just go to choicematters.org, and click on the CONTACT US button. Fill in the form and click, SUBMIT. Or you can send your Name & E-Mail address to wcla@wcla.org.

Pharmacists: Dispensing With Your Rights

By Concetta Erica Agro

A Wisconsin woman was denied birth control pills by her local pharmacist, on the grounds that it was against his personal beliefs. She asked him to suggest another pharmacy and he refused. When the woman finally found another pharmacy, the original pharmacist refused to transfer her prescription. The woman, Amanda Phiede, was unable to get her medication. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported this specific incident. Similar stories are appearing daily across the country.

Pharmacists say, "No!"

Pharmacists are refusing to fill women's prescriptions for birth control. They are invoking the "right to refuse" to dispense birth control, based on religious grounds. Pharmacists are arguing that these prescriptions impede the creation of life, and, in the case of emergency contraception, they assert, incorrectly, that a human life is being extinguished. What has for the past 35 years been an integral part of women's healthcare has suddenly become a strategic opportunity.

Birth control is being denied to women who have valid prescriptions from their doctors. Delaying or refusing to dispense prescribed medications is dangerous and unlawful. The current administration's attitude towards women and reproductive rights has empowered some pharmacists to refuse to dispense birth control.

Some small towns have only one pharmacy. Refusing to fill a prescription forces a woman to travel far out of her way for her prescribed medication. She may not receive the medication in time for it to be effective, or even worse, not receive it at all. Furthermore, the pharmacist could choose not to transfer the prescription to another pharmacy, thus effectively controlling a woman's reproductive life. This is a not so subtle way of coercing a woman to be abstinent, to use the rhythm method, or just to continue bearing children.

Political Responses

Again women find themselves on the receiving end of discriminatory action. "Make no mistake about this, the refusal to fill birth control prescriptions targets

women and their choice of contraception, not men's," said Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-FL). "I have no doubt that if pharmacists were refusing to sell men condoms that this issue would have already been addressed legislatively."

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich enacted an emergency rule in response to complaints about unfilled contraceptive prescriptions. His temporary directive requires that these types of prescriptions be filled or transferred promptly. Blagojevich has been targeted because of his proposal. Pharmacists for Life International, which describes itself as "the only pharmacy association which is exclusively pro-life", menacingly refers to the governor as "Slobodan" Blagojevich. This slur relegates Governor Blagojevich to the equivalent of the former Serbian president tried for genocide, Slobodan Milosevic.

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Representative Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and others have introduced bills in Congress that would respond to this alarming new trend. These bills would guarantee individuals access to their prescriptions.

Following in John Ashcroft's Footsteps

Attorney Generals Phill Kline of Kansas and Steve Carter of Indiana have followed former US Attorney General John Ashcroft's backdoor attack on medical privacy and abortion rights. In 2003 Ashcroft tried, and failed, to gain access to women's medical records from clinics and hospitals across the country. Ashcroft had claimed that he needed the records in order to defend the first national law ever banning an abortion procedure.

Kansas

In February, Attorney General Kline subpoenaed the records of at least 90 women from two Kansas reproductive health clinics, both of which offer legal second trimester abortions. Kline claimed that he was investigating possible violations of two state laws, one which requires reporting of all child rape cases and the second which limits late-term abortions. However, he subpoenaed the 2003 records of *all* women, not just the very young or those who had abortions at 22 weeks or later. His public record as a staunch opponent of abortion rights puts into question his motives.

Julie Burkhardt, executive director of pro-choice political action committee ProKanDo, pointed out that if Kline's objective was truly to uncover child sexual abuse he would also have subpoenaed the records of family physicians, social workers and others.

Comprehensive Health, which is a Planned Parenthood clinic in the Kansas City suburbs, and Women's Health Care Services have filed an appeal with the Kansas Supreme Court. A decision could take months.

Indiana

Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter launched his attack on medical privacy in March. He used the argument that he too was investigating possible child abuse as well as Medicaid fraud. None of the eight patients records initially turned over by Planned Parenthood nor the 73 records sought by the Indiana Medicaid Fraud Control Unit concerned abortion. In fact, of the 108,000 plus people that Indiana's Planned Parenthood clinics saw in 2004, less than 5% received abortion counseling. The vast majority of clients sought other services, from cancer screenings to pregnancy tests.

Kenneth Falk, legal director of the Indiana Civil Liberties Union, called this a "fishing" expedition, and said that it would have an adverse affect on minors' seeking reproductive health care.

On March 14, 2005, Indiana Planned Parenthood filed a lawsuit seeking temporary and permanent injunctions to stop the Attorney General from reviewing the records of patients

[See Ashcroft on page 10](#)

Reproductive Rights, A County Issue? ABSOLUTELY!

The County is the primary health services provider in Westchester County. WCLA—Choice Matters wants a county government that understands that reproductive health care is a powerful issue within the health services departments.

Budget issues: The departments that relate to women and families comprise a large portion of the county budget.

County Medical Center: The County Board of Legislators (CBL) confirms appointments to the hospital board and in turn ultimately controls whether the hospital will continue to provide abortions. The CBL enters into contracts with the Medical Center to provide services to inmates of the county jail.

County Health Department: The County decides whether County Health Department clinics will provide reproductive health services, counseling, and referral for abortions.

Department of Social Services: The DSS administers the system by which pregnant women can get fast-track Medicaid eligibility for pregnancy-related conditions, including abortion. The CBL oversees DSS to ensure that a full range of reproductive services are provided by HMOs to those who are eligible for DSS assistance.

County Jail: The CBL decides whether inmates will get pregnancy tests, abortions, and prenatal care on request and without delay.

Commissioners: The County Executive appoints, and County legislators vote to confirm commissioners. Commissioners important to the pro-choice issue are Health, Social Services, and Corrections.

Citizen Information Service: The County decides whether it will include referrals for clients for family planning and abortions.

Office for Women: The County Executive and the CBL determine the budget and the number of positions in an office that provides a wide range of services and information for women.

Ashcroft from page 9

at Planned Parenthood clinics across the state. The judge rejected their motions. Planned Parenthood subsequently asked for a stay in the case and will appeal the decision.

Strategy

An anti-abortion rights group from Texas named Life Dynamics deserves full credit for developing this strategy for attacking women's medical privacy. According to *IndyStar.com* (the online edition of *The Indianapolis Star*), as early as 2001, Life Dynamics began lobbying government officials to investigate clinics that provided reproductive rights services, claiming that the medical facilities were shielding pedophiles who were having sex with minors. Life Dynamics has declared that, "Planned Parenthood and National Abortion Federation are involved in a "pedophile protection scandal."

Women's Advisory Board: The County Executive and the CBL determine the make-up of the Women's Advisory Board.

Legislation on other levels of government: The County lobbies on state and federal issues that relate to reproductive health care. The CBL votes on resolutions supporting or opposing legislation on the higher levels of government.

Teens from page 7

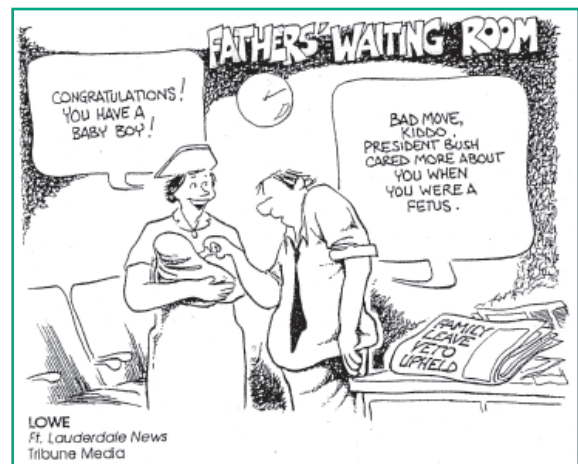
able local schools and organizations to develop programs for their own communities.

Medicaid Funding

Medicaid funding has been protected! The 2005 New York State budget allocation for family planning has remained basically unchanged from the 2004 budget. This is wonderful news for the women of New York. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, one in 10 women in America is covered by Medicaid. Given the dramatic eradication of coverage of reproductive services in other states for women of low income, New York pro-choice legislators should definitely be commended for keeping this in the budget.

Challenge to Women's Health and Wellness Law

Since January, 2003, under the Women's Health and Wellness Law, almost all employee health plans that cover prescription drugs have been required to cover contraception as well. Soon after the bill became law, Catholic Charities and nine other religiously affiliated groups brought suit against the state, claiming the "refusal clause" was too narrow and that the law should exempt a broader range of religiously affiliated organizations. They lost their challenge. The law was found to be constitutional. Further, in its decision, the trial court stated that broadening the clause would hinder the law's purpose of promoting women's health and fighting gender discrimination. In September 2004, Catholic Charities appealed the court's ruling. No decision on the appeal has yet been rendered.



**ACTION
ALERT!
ACTION
ALERT!**

These elected officials represent you. Contact them and let them know how YOU want them to vote.

Your Elected Officials: Keep For Future Reference

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CBL 15 Gordon Burrows
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CBL 16 Andrea Stewart-Cousins [+]
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CBL 17 Jose Alvarado [+/-]
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Key

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

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

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Hola desde Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion—Choice Matters (WCLA—¡ Escoger Importa!)

WCLA—Escoger Importa, está orgulloso y contento de anunciar que, comenzando con ésta edición, incluiremos una sección en español en nuestro boletín informativo. Es nuestra forma de decir, “Bienvenidos. Únete a nosotros para proteger los derechos reproductivos de la mujer!”

The National Latina Institute para la Salud Reproductiva en todo el País ha informado que las mujeres hispanas y afroamericanas tienen un índice de abortos más elevado que las mujeres blancas no hispanas, fundamentalmente por los altos índices de embarazos no deseados. La Directora Ejecutiva de NLRH Silvia Henriquez dice que, a menudo, la lengua y la pobreza son barreras para las mujeres hispanas que desean obtener abortos legales (Brundrett, Columbia).

WCLA—Escoger Importa cree que la educación sobre los derechos reproductivos en los Estados Unidos, y en cada uno de los cincuenta estados que componen los Estados Unidos, es el modo de cambiar éstas estadísticas. La educación es la clave para hacer seguros y legales los derechos reproductivos.

Esperamos convertirnos en un recurso educativo en temas relacionados con el derecho a elegir de la mujer.

Nuestros Derechos Legales

Las mujeres por todos los Estados Unidos tienen el derecho de conseguir sistemas de control de natalidad y elegir finalizar embarazos no deseados. Estos derechos fueron reconocidos por decisiones de la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos.

El control de la natalidad se hizo legal por todos los Estados Unidos por dos decisiones judiciales: *Griwold vs. Connecticut* (1965), y *Eisenstadt vs. Baird* (1972).

En 1973, en el caso de *Roe vs. Wade*, la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos decretó que las mujeres tienen el derecho fundamental de obtener abortos seguros y legales.

Estas leyes existen todavía. Sin embargo, han sido debilitadas y están en constante ataque. Tres casos importantes (*Harris vs. McRae*, *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services*, y *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey*) otorgaron a cada estado el derecho de establecer muchas restricciones a los derechos de las mujeres. Para empeorar las cosas, la Administración Bush está en contra de todos los aspectos relacionados con el control de la natalidad y ha hecho todo lo posible para limitar el control de las mujeres sobre su propio cuerpo.

En contraste con muchos otros estados, el Estado de Nueva York posee una legislación **pro-choice** fuerte. Esto se debe al trabajo duro de WCLA—Escoger Importa y otras organizaciones **pro-choice**, (organizaciones que protegen el derecho de una mujer de escoger cuando procrear.)

Las mujeres en el Estado de Nueva York pueden recibir cobertura del Medicaid para métodos anticonceptivos incluyendo el aborto.

La legislación para la Salud y el Bienestar de las mujeres, que se convirtió en ley en el 2003, requiere que casi todos

los empleadores cuya cobertura de salud ofrece planes de medicamentos, deben incluir cobertura de medicamentos y sistemas anticonceptivos aprobados. También deben pagar por mamografías anuales para detectar el cáncer de pecho para las mujeres a partir de los 40 años, cubrir el costo de citologías (pap smears) para la detección del cáncer cervical, y la cobertura de la medicación de la densidad ósea.

La contracepción de emergencia en las salas de emergencia también se convirtió en ley en el 2003. Esta ley requiere que todos los sobrevivientes de un ataque sexual sean aconsejados acerca de los métodos anticonceptivos de emergencia (EC) y sean ofrecidos en el mismo sitio.

Un proyecto de ley llamado El Acto de Prevención de Embarazos no Deseados ha sido llevado al senado de Nueva York. Si se aprobase, permitiría que los métodos anticonceptivos de emergencia (EC) sea distribuido en farmacias y por enfermeras certificadas. Esto significa que las mujeres que han tenido relaciones sexuales sin protección puedan obtener EC sin tener que ir primero a un médico.

Otro proyecto de ley es el **Healthy Teens Act**. El objetivo de este proyecto de ley es la educación sexual de los adolescentes, ayudándoles a aprender sobre comportamiento seguro y sano. Esta propuesta de ley permitirá a las escuelas y organizaciones locales desarrollar programas, en sus propias comunidades, para adolescentes.

Manteniendo el Estado de Nueva York pro-choice y pro-women.

No es un accidente que el Estado de Nueva York sea considerado un estado fuerte pro-choice. WCLA—Escoger Importa y otras organizaciones de derechos reproductivos trabajan duro para asegurarse de que Nueva York sigue su curso, a pesar de las grandes presiones de grupos anti-choice. Tenemos éxito porque nuestras organizaciones tienen distintas funciones. Otros grupos proveen servicios reproductivos y forman grupos de presión para el paso de la legislación. WCLA—Escoger Importa es diferente y única.

¿Qué es WCLA-La elección importa?

WCLA—Escoger Importa no es como ninguna organización que haya conocido antes. La misión de WCLA—Escoger Importa es garantizar que el aborto y los medios anticonceptivos se mantengan legales y accesibles. Queremos que todas las mujeres sean capaces de hacer y mantener sus propias decisiones sobre procreación sin impedimentos o coerción, independientemente de la edad, salario, estado civil o residencia. Trabajamos para asegurar que los servicios reproductivos y los anticonceptivos estén cubiertos por los seguros médicos públicos y privados, y para que el tratamiento de salud reproductiva sea adminis-

See Hola on page 13

¡La Contracepción de Emergencia y RU486 no son lo mismo! ¿Cuales son las Diferencias?

La Contracepción de Emergencia (EC) es una clase de píldora anticonceptiva que, si se toma en las 72 horas después de haber tenido relaciones sexuales sin protección, previene el embarazo de la mujer. EC reduce significativamente la posibilidad de quedarse embarazada en un 89% de los casos. Este método funciona interrumpiendo la ovulación, previniendo la fertilización del huevo y frenando la implantación del huevo en el útero. ¡La Concepción no ha ocurrido!

La Contracepción de Emergencia:

- No es un aborto (funciona inhibiendo la ovulación, la fertilización o la implantación).
- Previene el embarazo.
- Utilice EC cuando su método anticonceptivo falla o si tiene relaciones sexuales sin protección (por ejemplo, cuando el condom se rompe, en casos de violación, o si ha olvidado tomar la píldora durante dos o más días).
- Usted debe tomar dos píldoras:
 - La primera píldora la debe de tomar antes de que pasen 72 horas desde su relación sexual
 - La segunda píldora la debe de tomar doce horas después de la primera pastilla.
- Esta aprobada por el FDA para prevenir el embarazo.
- Cuesta alrededor de \$25
- No es efectiva a la hora de acabar con un embarazo ya existente

RU486 es un tipo de aborto que utiliza píldoras para acabar

con un embarazo. Las píldoras se deben de tomar antes de la novena semana de embarazo para que sean efectivas. A este método se le llama aborto médico.

RU486:

- Es un aborto no-quirúrgico
- Acaba con el embarazo usando una combinación de píldoras que se deben de tomar antes de la novena semana de embarazo para que sean efectivas.
- Esta aprobada por el FDA para acabar con el embarazo.
- Cuesta entre \$350 y \$575.
- No es efectiva como método de emergencia anticonceptivo.

WCLA—Choice Matters (WCLA—Escoger Importa) neither warrants or guarantees the accuracy of the Spanish translation of the articles contained herein. WCLA—Choice Matters (WCLA—Escoger Importa) is in no way affiliated with any of the other organizations cited in the articles, and cannot be held responsible for any services they may provide.

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Hola, from page 12

trado de forma estrictamente confidencial.

Conseguimos nuestro objetivo al conseguir candidatos **pro-choice** y seguidores elegidos y designados a cada nivel del gobierno. ¿Cómo hacemos eso? Educándole a Ud, el votante potencial, sobre todos los temas relacionados con los derechos reproductivos de la mujer. No le pedimos nada, EXCEPTO que, si Ud. es un ciudadano, vote. Creemos que un votante educado en el tema **pro-choice** es nuestro mejor votante.

Qué hacemos

- Publicamos un boletín informativo llamado ProChoice tres veces al año, con noticias y análisis de temas en las noticias relacionadas con/o que impactan los derechos reproductivos.
 - Imprimimos la guía amarilla de voto **Prochoice**, que publica WCLA—Escoger Importa, apoyando en cada elección desde el legislador del condado hasta el presidente.
 - Escribimos artículos dando nuestra opinión y cartas al director.
 - Participamos en entrevistas de radio, television por cable y artículos de periódico.
 - Mantenemos un sitio en internet: www.choicematters.org
 - Promovemos una guía de candidatos prochoice. Éste es un folleto que guía a los candidatos a traves de todos los

temas sobre el derecho al aborto, sub-temas y proposiciones de ley.

- Recientemente hemos empezado también un programa de alcance de universidades locales en el área. Esperamos cooperar con publicaciones estudiantiles y estudios de programas de mujer para que nuestro mensaje llegue a la audiencia más joven.
- Trabajamos constantemente para expandir nuestra base de datos para contactar mujeres votantes en el Condado de Westchester. (¡Acabamos de extendernos al Condado de Montgomery, Pennsylvania!) Nuestra base de datos contiene ahora mismo cerca de 70,000 direcciones. Identificamos constantemente votantes, con la esperanza de que nuestro boletín informativo llegue a todos los votantes prochoice.

Datos Financieros

WCLA—Escoger Importa esta incorporado en el Estado de Nueva York. No somos miembros de ninguna organización. Somos una organización sin proposito lucrativo bajo la sección del código 501 (c) (4) del IRS para evitar limitaciones en la actividad política; pero las donaciones a WCLA—Escoger Importa no son deducibles de los impuestos. Los gastos de elecciones son pagados por **WCLA-PAC**, que es financiada por separado.

A Huge Step Closer

By Assemblywoman Amy Paulin
I am pleased and proud to report that, on January 31, 2005, the New York State Assembly passed my emergency contraception bill, the "Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act." As I write this article, the Senate has just passed Senator Nick Spano's companion bill. The women of New York State owe Senator Spano their gratitude for his steadfast commitment and strong leadership on this issue. At press time the bill awaits signature by Governor Pataki, who has made no commitment as to whether he will sign it ... or not.

If Governor Pataki signs the bill, New York will join Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico and Washington in providing for broader access to emergency contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies. If Governor Pataki signs the bill, there will be 122,000 fewer unintended pregnancies and 82,000 fewer abortions in New York State per year.* If Governor Pataki signs the bill, common sense and concern will have prevailed and a significant political victory will have been won.

As most of us know, emergency contraception generally prevents pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of sexual intercourse and is particularly effective if taken within the first 24 hours. It works by stopping ovulation, preventing fertilization or disrupting implantation of a fertilized egg. It cannot terminate an already established pregnancy.

While only the Food and Drug Administration of the federal government may switch a drug from prescription to over-the-counter status, states may determine which providers can prescribe medications and under what circumstances. New York law presently requires that only a health professional may prescribe emergency contraception and most health professionals require an office visit before they will write a prescription. My bill increases access to EC by allowing New York State pharmacists and registered nurses to dispense EC from a "non-patient-specific order" written by a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner or licensed midwife. Thus women will be able to bypass the difficulties involved in obtaining medical appointments at offices, avoiding long waits and inconvenient appointments. Timing is crucial in the use of emergency contraception; the increased access that my bill provides will make obtaining it considerably less problematic.

Access to emergency contraception is one more tool, and an important one, in the effort to prevent unintended pregnancies. It's critical that the governor sign the bill ... for the health, safety and protection of New York women.

* Report released by New York State Comptroller Alan Hevesi in November, 2003.



Lest We Forget

This letter is for my friend Gina. Gina, I am sure, would have written a letter for herself but she died in 1969. We were both freshman in college, 18 years old, full of adventure, and thought we knew everything. Gina died of septic shock caused by an infection from the illegal abortion she obtained in Mexico.

When Gina returned from Mexico, we knew she was sick, but she wouldn't go to the local doctors. Her parents had thrown her older sister out of the house when she became pregnant. Gina was afraid to tell her parents about the pregnancy itself. To speak of an abortion was unthinkable.

After Gina finally collapsed it was too late. None of her friends were able to attend Gina's funeral, and her parents made sure no one really knew why she died.

But I knew, and I will never forget my lovely, witty, wonderful friend, Gina. She would be here today if abortions had been legal in 1969. How can anyone forget that?

Signed,
Gina's friend

Letter in "In Our Own Words... Collected Recollection in Honor of Roe v. Wade," edited by Elizabeth Lake in conjunction with NARAL, Peanut Butter Publishing, 1998.

Nightmares of Today

Two Years in Prison & a \$1000 fine for a Self-Induced Abortion...in 2005?

Gabriela Flores, a 22-year-old migrant worker from Mexico, struggles to support her three children. She lives in Pelion, South Carolina, and speaks very little English. Last year upon discovering that she was pregnant and that the father would provide no assistance, Gabriela asked her sister in Mexico to send Cytotec pills, an ulcer medication that also is used to cause a medical abortion. Within hours of ingesting the pills, she aborted. Flores and a friend then buried the fetus in their backyard but did not notify a coroner.

Because of these actions, Gabriela Flores is now awaiting trial for committing an unlawful abortion. Gabriela is being charged under a rarely used state law that makes it a crime for a woman to induce her own abortion. Gabriela is also charged with failure to report the abortion to the county coroner. The police considered murder charges but decided against them because they could not prove that the fetus could have survived on its own.

Gabriela was held for nearly four months in the Lexington County jail before being released on her own recognizance. If found guilty she faces up to two years in prison and a \$1,000 fine, *The Columbia State* reports.

The State reported that in a handwritten statement in Spanish, Gabriela said that she used the pills from Mexico because, "I knew that I was not going to be able to support four kids — two here and two in Mexico." "They need me a lot. They are little. Please forgive me."

As reported by *Kaiser Daily Reproductive Health Report*, May 3, 2005 and *The State*, May 1, 2005.

Sandra Day O'Connor's resignation convinced me! Use my contribution to unite pro-choice America and to fight back against right-wing extremists!

I'll support WCLA-Choice Matters' efforts: : \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$150 \$100 \$50 Other \$_____

Visa, MC, AmEx (min \$35) _____ Expires _____ Signed _____

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____ I will volunteer for WCLA-Choice Matters. Send me a form.

City/Zip _____ I will contact my legislators when notified. By e-mail.

Political Party _____ Phone _____ I will do phoning.

I won't vote for candidates who would restrict abortion.

Checks are payable to WCLA-Choice Matters. Mail with this coupon to 235 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains, NY 10605. Contributions to WCLA-Choice Matters are not tax deductible. To phone in a charge, please call (914) 946-5363.

Como Obtener Servicios Reproductivos WCLA-Choice Matters: Asequibles y de Confianza An Update

***Planned Parenthood** es una organización sin propósito lucrativos que provee a todas las mujeres servicios ginecológicos, incluyendo métodos anticonceptivos y abortos. La mayoría de las tarifas están basadas sobre una escala que depende de sus ingresos y del tamaño de su familia. A nadie se le niega estos servicios por falta de ingresos. Tiene diversos locales en Westchester, incluyendo Mount Kisco 914/666-6025, Mount Vernon 914/668-7927, New Rochelle 914/632-4442, and White Plains 914/761-6566.

***All Women's Health and Medical Services** es una oficina privada que provee a las mujeres servicios ginecológicos. No establece sus tarifas sobre una escala como lo hace Planned Parenthood pero acepta Medicaid y seguro médico. Tiene diversos locales incluyendo White Plains: 914/946-0050.

*Usted puede encontrar una lista de clínicas que realizan abortos clínicos en una página web de **la National Coalition of Abortion Providers**. Consulte las direcciones siguientes para encontrar una lista por estado de servicios disponibles: <http://www.abortionclinicdirectory.com> or www.ru486.com.

De acuerdo con la información publicada por internet, este Directorio de Clínicas con servicios de aborto es producido por la **Foundation to Preserve Access to Abortion**, una organización sin propósito lucrativos que es la rama educativa de la National Coalition.

¡Hagase oír!

¡Regístrese para votar!

Votar en los Estados Unidos es la manera más importante de hacer oír su voz como ciudadano. Si usted es un ciudadano de los Estados Unidos, usted puede votar. Pero antes de poder votar, usted necesita registrarse. Usted se puede registrar en persona o por correo. La dirección postal es: Westchester Board of Elections, 25 Quarropas St., White Plains, NY, 10601. Usted puede recoger los formularios para registrarse ahí o en el Department of Motor Vehicles. Si necesita más información, llame al Board of Elections, (914) 995-5700.

WCLA—Choice Matters hasn't stopped moving since before the November elections. We're fired up to reach out to as many pro-choice residents as possible, because the protection of women's reproductive rights depends on people like you and me—voters.

You could say our motto is, "Just Do It!" Since the 1970s, we have been mailing our free ProChoice newsletters to individuals like you, keeping you apprised of the issues confronting women. We have been continuously investigating and monitoring the positions taken by candidates and elected officials to keep you informed. We believe that an educated pro-choice voter is our best voter.

Having assessed the impact of the 2004 elections and the real horrors being thrust upon us by the Bush Administration and the ultra-reactionary Congress, WCLA—Choice Matters has committed itself to a very pro-active strategy.

Since November 2004:

1. We changed our name. We are now known as WCLA—Choice Matters, Inc. This change answers the needs of the political environment of 2005. It also gives the organization the opportunity for a greater geographic reach at a time where grassroots organizing has proven, once again, to be the one sure way to educate individuals on the issue of choice.
2. We added the names of over 3,000 more Westchester County residents to our database and are in the process of adding many more.
3. We upgraded our computer network to handle the large expansion in our database.

Now, in 2005 and beyond:

1. We are upgrading our telephone system so that we can reach even more potential pro-choice residents;
2. We are launching our new web site;

See Update on Page 16

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Special thanks to Good To Go Gourmet Deli & Catering for generously donating a \$250 Gift Certificate to benefit WCLA-Choice Matters. The raffle has been a great success because of your support.



Good To Go Gourmet Deli & Catering
279 Mamaroneck Ave
White Plains
914/683-5944
Open Monday-Friday 6AM-3PM

If you would like to sponsor an event, please call WCLA-Choice Matters @ 914/946.5363.

Update from page 15

- 3. We are beginning to reach out to other cities and counties, and to speakers of other languages; and
- 4. **WE'RE MOVING.** We are moving next door, to 235 Mamaroneck Avenue, to expand our office space to accommodate the increased number of phoners and volunteers.

We recognize that these are tough times and they are probably going to get rougher before they get better. That said, we want you—our readers and supporters—to know that we will not let you down. We are as committed today as we were in 1972, when WCLA was founded, to keeping abortion legal and to ensuring that all women, regardless of race, class, status, geography or ability to pay, have full, unimpeded access to reproductive health care!

Please see the coupon on page 15

WCLA-Choice Matters da la bienvenida a nuestros lectores españoles. Pase a las páginas 12, 13 y 15 para obtener más información.

Inside

War of the Words	2	Nita Lowey.....	7	Reproductive Rights in the County...10
Sleeper Cells.....	3	Pharmacists and Your Rights.....	8	Your Elected Officials.....11
Justice O'Connor.....	3	Following Ashcroft.....	8	Spanish Articles..... 12,13,15
In Memoriam.....	5			Amy Paulin.....14