

Power Up!

... A newsletter filled with thoughts for powerful Planned Parenthood people.

Second Edition, 2/4/15



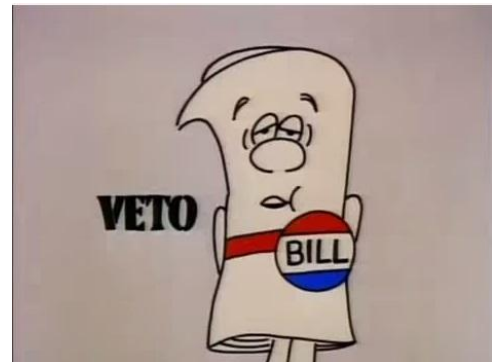
Legislative Update: National

By Christina Soliz, East Michigan Field Organizer

The new federal legislature has officially started! The 114th Congress was officially sworn in on January 6, 2015. John Boehner was re-elected Speaker and will preside over the House for the next two years. A quick Congressional profile in case you forgot who has control (found on clerk.house.gov/member_info/cong.aspx):

House		Senate	
MEMBERSHIP	PARTY DIVISIONS	MEMBERSHIP	PARTY DIVISIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 435 Members• 5 Delegates• 1 Resident Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 246 Republicans• 188 Democrats• 0 Independents• 1 Vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100 Senators (Vice President votes in case of a tie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 44 Democrats• 54 Republicans• 2 Independents

In the weeks leading up to the 42nd anniversary of Roe v. Wade, Republicans in the House were planning to a vote on a bill that would ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. This bill was (and is) highly unpopular, so unpopular that **women in the GOP were backing away from it**. On the night before this scheduled vote (Jan. 22), Republican leaders canceled that vote and instead held an emergency session in the House Rules Committee late the night before to prepare H.R. 7 – the “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2015” for a floor vote on Jan. 22nd. This bill would raise taxes by denying women and families whose health insurance plans include abortion coverage the federal tax credits they are entitled to under the Affordable Care Act and could deny access to health insurance coverage that of abortion beyond the circumstances of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger. This bill passed in the House and when it goes to the Senate, it will most likely pass there as well.



Luckily, our President loves women and understands that this will hurt women and families. In fact, when this bill was introduced in the last Congress, President Obama has stated that he would veto his same bill when it was being talked about last Congress. He said “**The legislation would intrude on women’s reproductive freedom and access to health care; increase the financial burden on many Americans; unnecessarily restrict the private insurance choices that consumers have today, and restrict the District of Columbia’s use of local funds, which undermines home rule.**” YAY PRESIDENT OBAMA!

It’s been said before, and it will be said again, we have a big fight ahead of us! **Thank you for being an amazing activist!**



Legislative Update: Michigan By Jenny Kinne, West Michigan Field Organizer

State of the State

On January 20th, Governor Snyder shared his vision for Michigan in his State of the State address.

Among Gov. Snyder's biggest announcements was a confirmation that the Department of Human Services and the Department of Community Health will be merged. This move will create one large agency that will look over public assistance programs and Medicaid for the entire state. Together, the two departments employ more than 14,000 employees, and they account for roughly 45 percent of the state budget (much of the funding comes from the federal government). The goal of this merger is to increase efficiency and create a less bureaucratic system.

Gov. Snyder also addressed the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act by urging lawmakers to renew a conversation on expanding such rights to LGBT peoples. His comments won a standing ovation, and we can only hope that this energy will produce positive change in the next year.

The Governor urged voters to embrace the road funding ballot proposal in May that would increase state sales taxes from 6 to 7 percent in order to cover much-needed repairs. This sales tax jump would exempt fuel. As we addressed in the [last issue of Power Up](#), it is disappointing that our state lawmakers could not produce a solution themselves. While our roads need a lot of attention, any ballot proposal that brings tax increases to voters is a huge challenge to pass.

“Religious Freedom” Legislation still threatens Michigan’s marginalized!

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) has been reintroduced in Lansing after dying during Lane Duck session. This law was originally introduced by Republican Representative Frank Foster in response to a proposed expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

A state version of the RFRA could significantly undermine any advances made through the expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Discrimination is often defended under RFRA.

Across the country we have seen employers take up the issue of birth control, asserting that their religious beliefs are being violated when the law asks them to provide birth control coverage to women in employee health plans. Many states have also seen RFRA used to defend discriminatory practices in the hiring and servicing of LGBTQ and minority populations. Practices such as child labor, abduction, and abuse can be defended through RFRA so long as the persecutor's actions can be proven as in-keeping with their sincerely-held religious beliefs.

This law is dangerous, and it is disproportionately threatening to people in Michigan who are already marginalized (women, minorities, low income folks, and LGBTQ populations).

We will keep you updated as this bill moves through our state government, but for now, please to contact me at jenny.kinne@ppmchoice.org if you are interested in taking action!

Choice & Justice already under attack in Michigan!

Right out of the gate many conservative legislators are standing behind laws that threaten a woman's right to have an abortion. Rather than focusing on budget, roads or educations, our lawmakers are throwing their weight behind bills that jeopardize personal healthcare decisions.

Incoming tea partiers Cindy Gamrat and Todd Courser have already pledged that the first piece of legislation they introduce will be a **personhood amendment** that would ban abortion in Michigan.

For those of you who are not familiar with personhood laws, they are the most extreme form of anti-abortion laws. The goal of personhood regulations is to extend the legal concept of "personhood" to the unborn, therefore making abortion a criminal act.

Gamrat and Courser's plan to introduce "life at conception" legislation is beyond dangerous for women in our state. It is also ridiculously religious at its source. In case you need proof, the Tea Party's "Contract for Liberty" (more on this below) states that a woman exercising her right to have a safe and legal abortion "absolutely conflicts with both God's Word and our rights as guaranteed under the Constitution."

I know I am not alone in asking – when should my rights ever be determined by one group's religious beliefs?

Personhood has not yet been introduced in our state legislature, but we will let you know as soon as it appears!

In addition to personhood, a bill has been introduced in the state Senate that would further **regulate the reporting of abortion procedures**. This proposal is what we at Planned Parenthood call a TRAP law (targeted regulation of abortion providers). These laws are typically passed in the name of "protecting women's health," but all they do is add layers of paperwork, oversight, and cost to our work that make continuing service incredibly difficult and sometimes impossible.

The current bill on the table, Senate Bill 27, would require that physicians write a report for each abortion procedure performed, and that report would need to go to the Department of Community Health within 7 days of the procedure. The report would include but is not limited to the patient's race, age, number of previous pregnancies, the weight of the fetus, whether the fetus showed "signs of life," and method of payment.

The reporting would not reveal the identity of the patient; however, the reporting puts provider identity at further risk. It is important to remember that data shows that abortion has over a 99 percent safety record. This reporting regulation simply adds another layer of oversight to work that is already severely hampered in our state. It will not help women. It will hurt abortion providers and the women they serve.

A Michigan Tea Party Manifesto

In January, the Michigan Tea Party held a "PowWow" at a casino in Mt. Pleasant (no, I'm not kidding) to "go on offense to further Freedom's cause." The completely insensitive and racist title for this event is perfectly fitting to everything that it produced.

The "Contract for Liberty" was created, a description of the Tea Party's priorities for the coming year. The first priority is – you guessed it – protecting life at conception. Ironically enough, in this very same document the

Tea Party rails against regulated health insurance by stating that “there is no more fundamental right than to be free from government intrusion into the intimacy and privacy of our own bodies.”

I’m sorry, but WHAT?!? Yeah, we know... We have been fighting for that for decades. We have been fighting against you.

The defense of the gun rights is also a top priority. Todd Courser, one of the Tea Party’s leaders, has been very outspoken on this issue. He went so far as to call AR-15 semi-automatic rifles “modern muskets,” and he [posted photos](#) of his sons holding these weapons during what he called a session to “train up my four children as the weapons for liberty that will impact the future both for freedom, but also for Christ.” How terrifying.

The rest of the manifesto is pretty predictable. It includes cries for a free & independent state, the restoration of right to privacy from government intrusions, freedom from unjust taxation, freedom from economic intrusion, freedom to own property (I didn’t know this was under attack), freedom from regulatory tyranny, and freedom to worship.

Buckle your seatbelts folks. It’s going to be a crazy ride.



My Health, My Life. No Matter What By Lauren Bacans, Mid Michigan Field & Online Organizer

At Planned Parenthood, we are working to create a world where access to health care doesn't depend on who you are or where you live — where every woman has the opportunity to choose her own path to a healthy and meaningful life. In recent years, however, politicians have waged an unprecedented assault on women's access to reproductive health care at the state level, chipping away at access to safe and legal abortion, affordable birth control, and other basic preventive services.

We ask you to join with patients and supporters across the country to help us fight for these six truths.

1. I will fight for my and my family's right and ability to plan when and if to have a child.
2. I will fight to be cared for by a doctor who can provide me with medically accurate information and quality affordable care based on the latest medical research and their training and expertise—not based on a religious belief or political agenda.
3. I will fight for access to affordable reproductive health care, including abortion, for all - because everyone have equal access to health care no matter who we are, where we work, or where we live or come from.
4. I will fight for sex education programs that give young people reliable, accurate information to make responsible decisions and stay healthy.
5. I will fight for the right of women who have been raped to have access to compassionate care without delay or interference.
6. I will fight because no woman should have to face a screaming, terrorizing bully in order to access abortion and other reproductive health care services.

[Take the pledge.](#)

Sharing your story about your access to healthcare or Planned Parenthood can go a long way in the fight for the six truths. Share your story at www.miwomenstories.org.



Reproductive Justice for All

By Christina Soliz, East Michigan Field Organizer

SisterSong defines reproductive justice as “**the right to have children, not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments.**”

We cannot achieve reproductive justice until we address the racism, classism, and sexism in our society. For some who reap the benefits of privilege, it is sometimes hard to see the racism that is alive and well in our society. There are blatant examples- black men are often profiled by police, and there are more black men in our prison system than anyone else (as of 2010, black men were incarcerated at a rate of 3,074 per 100,000; Latinos: 1,258 per 100,000; and white men: 459 per 100,000. Go [here](#) for more details). And there are discreet examples- a black woman being denied housing from a potential renter based on her race (this [article](#) has a lot of good examples and information).

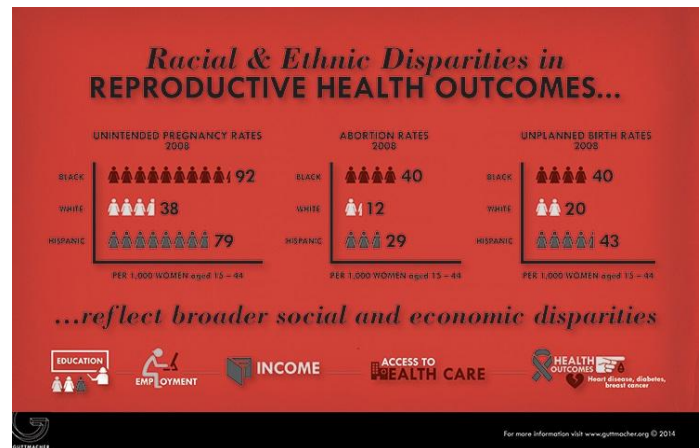
There are huge health disparities between women of color and white women in the outcomes of unwanted pregnancies. For example, the birthrate in 2010 for non-Hispanic white teenagers (23.6%) was half the rate for black teenagers (51.4%), and less than half the rate for Hispanic teenagers (55.6%). Another example is the abortion rate. The abortion rate for black teenagers (34.5%) was more than three times the rate for white teenagers (8.5%), and the rate among Hispanic teenagers (15.3%) was twice that rate. [Guttmacher Institute](#) has so many more facts, so I won't bore you with them, but you should check them out.

This is an infographic on racial and ethnic disparities in reproductive health outcomes (from Guttmacher, of course). I love it because it acknowledges the fact that reproductive health outcomes reflect other social and economic disparities in our society.

The combination of racism, classism and sexism affect women.

Access to education, employment, healthcare, child care, etc., has a direct effect on women's lives. When some women are oppressed and denied certain services, all women suffer. Abortion can be legal, but it will not matter unless all women have access to it. We do ourselves no favors by not standing with all women.

Until we recognize the racism, both overt and covert, in our society, we won't achieve reproductive justice for ALL women. Audre Lorde once wrote, “The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries.” So, my challenge to us this Black History Month: take a good look at ourselves. We need to recognize where we may be privileged and where we may be oppressed. We might be uncomfortable, but it's worth it. It's important that we are aware of ourselves for this movement. I also invite you to check out and celebrate organizations that are dedicated to all women (PPAM is one, but there's an extensive list in the open letter I reference below). Finally, please remember that this isn't something that we should do only in the shortest month of the year. **We need to be**



dedicated to forming partnerships and supporting organizations all the time. Only then can we truly achieve reproductive justice.

Please check out this [open letter to Planned Parenthood](#) back from August. At the end of the letter, there is a list of all the organizations and people who signed the letter. The letter resulted in a meeting with leaders from different reproductive justice organizations in Washington DC that led to a commitment to work together to advance reproductive justice for all women. Please take a few minutes to review the list and check out these organizations and all the work that they do.



Condoms for Everyone!

By Jenny Kinne, West Michigan Field Organizer

From February 9-13, all of us here at Planned Parenthood will be celebrating National Condom Week! This week is all about educating people on the importance of using condoms! We pass our free condoms, raise awareness, and work toward long-term goals such as making condoms accessible in schools.

Here in Grand Rapids, our volunteers do a condom bar crawl, where anyone lucky enough to be in their paths gets free protection. Similar fun activities happen all across the state!

We as Planned Parenthood activists fill this week with fun, but the reasons we advocate for condom use are dire. Condoms significantly reduce risk of sexually-transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS. In fact, current studies have found that you are 10,000 times less likely to contract HIV/AIDS if you are using a condom. Condoms also have an extreme impact by decreasing unintended pregnancy rates.

Visit [here](#) to learn more little-known facts about condoms, and be sure to visit our **Volunteer Opportunities** section to learn about what you can do in your area for **National Condom Week!**



Let's Keep Calm and Get to Work!

By Lauren Bacans, Mid Michigan Field & Online Organizer

Across the state, there are many new opportunities available, and your participation and input is key to their success. We have opportunities to join (and lead!) book clubs, become a part of a legislative action team, or do community outreach work.

Book clubs in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Lansing offer the opportunity to read and discuss books, both fiction and nonfiction, about the women's movement and reproductive justice. Take the opportunity to meet with your peers while discovering favorite books, new and old, and discuss today's most pressing issues.

Legislative action teams give you the opportunity to develop a working relationship with the legislators in your area, and educate elected officials on Planned Parenthood issues and services, legislation pertinent to reproductive justice, and advocacy campaigns happening in their district.

You can even begin building these relationships before someone is elected to office! **Identifying potential candidates** and helping them find the resources they need to run for office is an essential and often underused tool to build support for the issues that are important to you.

Throughout the year, there are opportunities to represent PPAM in your community. Joining a tabling team, or being a team leader at outreach events.

We also have **monthly activist nights** – as well as trainings – in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Lansing are an easy way to help out, meet other supporters in the area, and get your political fix.

Want to join the volunteer list? Simply email volunteer@ppmchoice.org with your name and location!

For a full list of events and volunteer activities, visit our [Events](#) page!

January Recap: Remembering Roe v. Wade

Roe v. Wade is the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized the right to an abortion, by affirming that a woman's right to privacy extended to her medical decisions. PPAM partnered with organizations across the state to celebrate the 42nd anniversary.

In **Lansing**, a group of 30 students and community members gathered to learn about the importance of defending Roe v. Wade today, and the way it has changed women's lives. A panel of five women spoke from a variety of perspectives, on the importance of Roe. Panelists included former Senator Gretchen Whitmer, Penny Gardner - Assistant Professor at MSU and President of the Lansing Association for Human Rights, Libby Bogdan-Lovis - Assistant Director of the Center for Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences at MSU, and Amanda West - Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan. The event was in partnership with the Michigan State University GenCen and Students for Choice.

In **Oakland County**, PPAM partnered with Northland Family Planning Centers, and the National Organization of Women- Oakland/Macomb County Chapter to bring a free screening of the documentary "Vessel." Vessel follows the work of Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, who founded Women on Waves- an organization that travels by ship to offshore waters to provide abortions to women who live in countries where abortion is illegal. After a while, the project transforms as a way to get information about a safe, World Health Organization sanctioned way to abort with pills to women. The film was amazing and well attended. After the film, Renee Chelian, from Northland Family Planning, led a discussion on the film and the process of medication abortion in the United States.

Were you able to attend any of our Roe events? Let us know what you thought about them, and what events you'd like to see in your community celebrating women's health. Email volunteer@ppmchoice.org.