

Power Up!

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

What's happening in Michigan?

By Jenny Kinne, West Michigan Field Organizer

It would be more accurate to title this section "what's *not* happening in Michigan"? We are barely into April, and already we are facing a slew of legislation targeting women's health. Please see below for all of the anti-choice legislation that we are facing. Then, take a look at an article written by one of our volunteers highlighting a particularly sneaky bill – the Choose Life License Plate.

Issue	Bill Number/Sponsor	Description
Religious Freedom Restoration Act	SB 4 (Shirkey)	Allows a person to use religion to discriminate by allowing them to opt out of taking part in an activity that violates their "sincerely held religious beliefs"
Reporting Requirement	SB 27 (Jones)	Requires additional reporting to the State of Michigan regarding complications from abortion services.
Choose Life License Plate	HB 4140 (Hooker) SB 84 (Colbeck)	Requires the Secretary of State to develop and issue a Choose Life fund-raising plate. The donations will be disbursed into a proposed "Choose Life Fund". Funds disbursed will be to agencies providing and promoting alternatives to abortion.
Defunding of Planned Parenthood	HB 4145 (Hooker)	Prohibits the State of Michigan from contracting with providers that offer abortion services. Defunds Planned Parenthood from receiving public funds.
19 Week Restriction	HB 4146 (Hooker)	Requires an abortion performed at 19 weeks or more to be performed in a hospital that has a neonatal unit.
Religious Objection for Adoption Placement	HB 4188 (LaFontaine) HB 4189 (Santana) HB 4190 (Leutheuser)	Allows discrimination of adoption placement due to religious or moral convictions.
Heartbeat Requirement	HB 4241 (Hooker)	Prohibits performing an abortion without first determining whether there is a detectable heartbeat except in an emergency.
Personhood	HB 4279 (Gamrat)	Changes the definition of a person/individual to include a fetus. Effectively outlaws abortion in the State of Michigan. Narrow exemption for "life" of the woman.
Religious Liberty and Conscience Protection Act	HB 4309 (Gamrat)	Allows healthcare payers, health facilities, and health providers a right to decline to provide or pay for certain objectionable health care services; and employees of a healthcare provider may request reassignment to other duties if asked to perform or assist with a service that violates their religious convictions.

The Choose Life License Plate

By Connie Flachs, West Michigan Volunteer

Imagine taking a Michigan road trip. Perhaps it's your summer break and you've chosen to drive to the Upper Peninsula. By hour three your playlist has repeated twice, you've run out of snacks, and the caffeine high from your morning coffee has faded. You turn to reading license plates to keep yourself entertained for the rest of your trip. You start to notice that there are a few different types of Michigan license plates. Scattered amongst the plates for state universities or environmental preservation are plates that proclaim "Choose Life".

At first glance, I would think this is a great thing. I choose life. You choose life. We're all here, choosing to live life and get out of bed every morning. If we didn't choose life we wouldn't be reading this article or imagining our summer vacation. However, there is a whole lot more tied up behind this seemingly obvious statement that the organization Right to Life of Michigan is lobbying to emboss onto license plates.

Right to Life of Michigan is hoping to pass Senate Bill 84. This bill would require the Secretary of State to create a special interest "Choose Life" license plate: anyone who purchases this plate will donate money to the Choose Life Michigan fund. Money in this fund will be distributed by Right to Life of Michigan to non-profit organizations that provide abortion alternatives.

Still, what's the problem? Abortion alternatives should be promoted. Non-profits should have funds to educate at-risk populations about birth-control or abstinence. Information on adoption should be made readily available. Yet, there is nothing in the bill that requires that funds go towards direct action. Therefore, money could easily go purely to media campaigns or propaganda distributed by the Right to Life of Michigan.

Why would Right to Life be distributing propaganda? Under the language of the bill it's feasible that both conservative and liberal non-profits could receive funding as long as they are participating in education or promotion of abortion alternatives. Planned Parenthood, an organization often fought against by the "pro-life" movement, is eligible for funding from the plates. Yet, when pressed, Right to Life has said that no funds will be allocated to organizations that provide abortions or give abortion referrals.

The real problem here is that the state will be controlling money for a special interest organization that will use the money to back their own specific ideology. License plates should not be ideological. That's what bumper stickers are for. Let's leave the license plates for vehicular identification and stick to bumper stickers for road trip entertainment.

What's happening nationally?

By Christina Soliz, East Michigan Field Organizer

2016 is right around the corner and people are getting ready to throw their names in the candidate pool. U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) is the first high profile candidate to announce that he's running for President in 2016. He made the formal announcement on Monday, March 23th. Go [here](#) and [here](#) to find out some more information about his positions on important issues.

In Michigan, we are facing a "Choose Life" license plate, but there is a Supreme Court case that could affect all license plate messaging laws. Read about Walker v. the Sons of Confederate Veterans [here](#). SCOTUS (Supreme Court of the United States) is dealing with two issues on this case: whether the messages and images that appear on state-issued specialty plates qualify as government speech immune from any requirement of viewpoint neutrality and whether Texas engaged in "viewpoint discrimination" by rejecting the license-plate design proposed by the Sons of Confederate Veterans when Texas did not issue their license plate. We'll see how the decision affects Right to Life's "choose life" plate.

Next up: A bill that would help victims of traffickers has been introduced in the U.S. Senate. The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was introduced by Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas). This act would set up a fund to help victims by using the fees charged to traffickers. This is really awesome, bipartisan bill, however, the Hyde Amendment has been attached to the bill and would prevent human trafficking victims from accessing safe and legal abortions. Go [here](#) to read more about this bill. It's hard to see really good legislation ruined by an amendment that limits a woman's ability to decide what's best for her. Planned Parenthood Action has a summary of all the bills that have the Hyde Amendment slapped on them. Read it [here](#). It really does stink that Congress keeps trying to interfere with women's health and rights. Keep your activist hats on folks, there's no rest for women's health champions like us!

What's happening now?

By Lauren Bacans, Mid Michigan Field Organizer

As we move into the summer, our volunteer program is making exciting changes with new opportunities for training and leadership. One of those leadership opportunities is heading a tabling team at one of our many summer festivals. Throughout the summer, Planned Parenthood participates in Pride events across the state, the Ann Arbor Art Festival, Eastown Street Fair, Arts Beats and Eats, and many other events.

Tabling training will be offered via webinar on May 20 and June 17 to prepare us for the summer season. These trainings will include messaging training, current campaign talking points, and best practices for tabling.

Throughout the summer, we will continue our regular activist nights, book clubs, and other volunteer opportunities.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, [please visit our website!](#)