It’s Not Just about Abortion: Full on Assaults against Women by Religious Right

As we approach the 47th Anniversary of Roe v Wade, which guarantees women the right to a safe abortion provided by licensed physicians, religious right-wingers in America are attempting to legalize outrageous medical rules and procedures.

First are the outright lies that most methods of birth control are “mini-abortions” and are therefore forbidden. These lies include pills, patches, hormonal rings, shots, IUDs, implanted rods, and “morning after” pills. Some “faith-based” pregnancy centers even refuse to recommend condom use per belief that “every sperm is a potential life.” Of course, abstinence and “natural family planning” (failure rate around 50%) are still OK.

Then we have the state-mandated lies that abortion causes breast cancer, infertility, mental illness, and drug addiction, as well as “fetal pain.” And the totally unnecessary mandate that all physicians providing abortions have “admitting privileges” at a nearby hospital (mileages vary). The truth is that in no other health care procedure—such as colonoscopy, plastic surgery, Botox injections, etc.—is there a requirement that the physician have admitting privileges anywhere.

Early in 2019, some faith-based pregnancy centers created another lie—the most dangerous of the fake advice given to women seeking abortion—one that has the potential to result in women’s death. The protocol for medical abortions (“pill abortions”) mandates a single pill (Mifeprex) swallowed in the office to stop the continued growth of the pregnancy; 48 hours later the patient takes Misoprostal tablets at home to empty the uterus. The lie zealots tell is that the woman “can change her mind” by simply not taking the second dose. However, without the second dose, the pregnancy may cease but if the uterus is not voided and remnants remain, they can infect the woman and kill her.

Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas passed legislation in the past year that requires the contents of every abortion, even as early as 5 or 6 weeks, to be buried or cremated (paid for by the abortion provider). As state courts are evaluating these mandates, several more states are considering such laws.
In the past few months, non-medical religious zealots, also in Ohio and Pennsylvania, have tried to mandate treatment of ectopic pregnancies by stitching the ectopic pregnancy into the woman’s uterus. Mind you, this procedure is entirely fictitious, and several board-certified OB GYN physicians have publicly condemned the concept. No matter, the zealots continue their quest.

The zealots have also demanded that, again with an ectopic pregnancy, health insurance be forbidden to pay for the abortion “until the woman’s life is shown to be in danger.” That means until she starts to hemorrhage, which might well be too late to save her life.

Lastly and most ludicrous, is Trump’s appointment of Sarah Pitlyk to the federal bench in Missouri. The American Bar Association has deemed her “unqualified,” but she clerked for Judge Kavanagh, so is well-known in right-wing circles. Her current passion is to ensure that all fertilized eggs being held for infertility purposes either be implanted immediately or buried because they are “human beings.” She is against all assisted reproduction, such as IVF (in vitro fertilization) and all surrogacy as “unnatural.”

In no other arena do we have “faith-based” politicians, legislators, or religious figures making health care decisions for our fellow Americans. Only in women’s health care do we have meddling and mandates by non-physicians, which are not just impinging on our human rights to confidential health care. Some of the aforementioned mandates would likely result in women’s death. We must remain alert and let our legislators know our rights cannot be threatened by religious bigotry.

—Karen Pataky, Chair, Health Policy Task Force of PPC

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TASK FORCE REPORT:
Gun Violence Prevention

February 1–8, 2020, is "National Gun Violence Survivors’ Week." Stay tuned for social media updates on how to get involved, and amplify the work of the GVP community

Legislative Updates

VIRGINIA

All of us know from news reports what is going on at the Richmond state capital. Some news like the ERA passage in both houses, is most exciting. Other news, exciting and troubling at the same time, as the VA legislators take up the promised gun safety measures that the VA 2019 state elections called for. Recently, the VA Senate has passed four measures: 1) Background checks on all firearms purchases; 2) Red Flag, allowing law enforcement to temporarily remove guns from individuals deemed a risk to themselves and others; 3) Ban on weapons by localities from certain events and government buildings; and 4) Cap handgun purchases at one per month. Senate passed: Background checks bill. By the time you receive this newsletter, other legislation will probably be passed and signed by Governor Northam.

WNDC VA members, email, text, or call your legislators in the House and Senate, and thank them for their constancy in support of gun safety. See the Link below for VA legislative information. Also, thank Gov. Northam for his leadership! https://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/

MARYLAND

It's been 565+ days since the outrageous attack on The Capita newspaper in Annapolis, when a shooter killed John McNamara, Rebecca Smith, Wendi Winters, Rob Hiaasen, and Gerald Fischman and wounded two others in their office with a shotgun.

Now Maryland lawmakers can take action by passing HB 4, a bill to close the gun loophole in Maryland. Unlike buying handguns, people with serious and dangerous histories can bypass a background check by purchasing a rifle or shotgun from an unlicensed seller, whether online or at a gun show. Maryland WNDC members, urge your lawmakers to pass stronger, safer gun laws that can help prevent future tragedies.

http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgageWebsite/members/district

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What We Must Do to Further the Delegitimization of Donald Trump

It is hard to think of a greater de-legitimization of President Trump than his impeachment by the House of Representatives, but we must do more to ensure that the broad American public accepts the Impeachment articles, delivered and taken up in the Senate under the provisions of the Constitution. It is essential that Trump not get reelected and that Russian tampering with the election not be repeated in 2020.

What has been missing is a concerted calling out of Trump on his immorality in the exercise of his position's powers. We must take seriously the total unacceptability of the lies and despicable insults he uses to abuse and degrade his enemies. He has crossed innumerable red lines, even into the territory of incitement to violence, encouraging his rallies to “take action” against his enemies, all but waving a gun. All of his opponents are treated as “traitorous” “un-American” scumbags.

The criticism of Trump that is not missing—and quite rightly accepted—is that Trump’s action leaves the US in a weaker security situation. The Administration’s initial explanation for killing Iranian General Qasum Suleimani was the existence of an “imminent” threat, a rationale that disappeared into the ever-expanding Trump fog. So we are left with an act that threatens American lives and American interests unnecessarily. Iran is stronger and the attack aided that: they have the ability to build a nuclear weapon and to get the US out of the region. Iraq, our ally in fighting ISIS, is far weaker, but also wants us gone. Trump is the cause. It was his action in pulling out of the successful Iran nuclear deal that started this chain reaction to a much more dangerous Middle East, open to Russian and Chinese—but not US— influence.

Another criticism that meets acceptability tests is that Trump’s actions are an attack on the US Constitution. Trump has declared himself above any law that Congress might pass. He has decided he does not have to respect powers given to Congress in failing to consult Congress on initiating a war. Trump's attack on the Constitution has been evidenced by many other of his actions, including refusal to obey subpoenas from Congress to send documents and officials to testify at his impeachment hearings. Putting himself above the law means that he considers himself not a democratic leader, but an authoritarian dictator.

What We Must Do:

Fight Authoritarianism at Home

Trump also weakens the US when he dismisses the importance of moral leadership. His “Fist in the Face” identity reduces his capacity to strengthen relationships with others and to form communities to advance action that is good. His power means his attack on the common good distorts us in that mean-spirited direction. We must make a stand against our degradation into mean-spiritedness. Authoritarianism is a type of government that has no moral or ethical center. What the leader says goes. Trump is defining his presidency as an anti-presidency. We must resist America becoming an authoritarian country. We must guard our democracy. Authoritarian countries are not guided by any ethical considerations.

Strengthen Alliances

We must constantly use the word “diplomacy,” the word “allies.” Because we have been pulling out of alliances, we are increasingly isolating ourselves. We are always stronger in alliance with other democracies.
Respect International Norms

Trump’s actions are not only outside the law, but they are unethical and immoral from other perspectives. One notable example, since pulled back, was his intention to follow up on his killing of Suleimani by bombing Iranian cultural sites. It is hard to think of anything more unethical and amoral. These sites belong to mankind, to humanity, not to one nation or individual. Destroying them is destroying part of human history and the human spirit.

In America, Trump Should Respect Americans Not Just His Supporters; Show Respect For His Predecessor as President

Democrats should take on directly Trump’s attacks on President Obama—every time he makes them. We must call out not only the indefensible lying, but the immorality of these attacks. In one egregious case Trump falsely accused President Obama of giving Iran the money that allows them to threaten us. Even worse was the video that his press secretary circulated putting Obama and Speaker Pelosi in Muslim garb and calling them supporters of terrorists.

Trump repeatedly identifies Republicans as the only true patriots and he identifies patriotism with morality and himself with God, or as Secretary Perry called him “the chosen one.” For Trump, Trumpism is morality. Hurting innocent people (putting children in cages on the border) is not immoral. You are passive in the face of who you accept as “the chosen one.” We have freedom of religion under our Constitution, which separates church and state. Therefore, if you want to hold these beliefs it is your private right. It is not your right to try and impose them on others and that is what we are seeing, and that is what we must combat.

—Elizabeth Clark, Chair, PPC Task Force on Democracy and Human Rights