



Michigan Religious Coalition

for Reproductive Choice

Fall 2008

MIRCRC Endorses Stem Cell Ballot Proposal

The Michigan Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice endorses the ballot proposal to legalize embryonic stem cell research in Michigan. This ballot proposal would not amend Michigan's law that prohibits cloning. It would allow embryos that would otherwise be thrown away to be used by scientists for research purposes.

Embryos are created in the hopes of bringing life and love into the world. Using embryos that would be destroyed otherwise to work for healing and renewed life for those with devastating diseases is I believe a continuation of those first impulses of life and love and an appropriate faith-filled response. Reverend Karen Gale, East Lansing

Jewish tradition teaches that preserving life and promoting health are among the most precious of values. These values have informed our affirmative commitment to medical science throughout the ages. Judaism has always encouraged scientific and medical advances. Jewish tradition requires that we use all available knowledge to heal the ill. Rabbi Amy Bigman, East Lansing

As people of faith, we have deep respect for human life. We believe, as do most authorities and commissions that have addressed the issue that human embryos have the potential of personhood and, as such, they deserve respect. However, excess embryos

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Board News

Many thanks to our retiring board members, Carol Bryson, Martha Davidson, Peggy Garver, and Marguerite Mahler, for many years of service. MIRCRC is recruiting new board members. Contact Joy at mircrc@mircrc.org for more information.

News from Ann Arbor

Sue Grubb, co-chair, has been part of the group monitoring the Chelsea Hospital merger with St. Joseph, a Catholic hospital to ensure reproductive health services do not get lost in the merger.

Letter from the Director

When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one. —Benjamin Franklin

The founders of the United States of America guaranteed the freedom of religion and the separation of religion and state to protect the principle of religious liberty. They believed that personal decisions should be made based on an individual's own values and beliefs.

Today, this principle is under attack. This past spring during Pope Benedict's visit to the U.S., the *New York Times* quoted his words on April 16, 2008, "Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted." The *Times* reported that he was talking about the U.S. secular tradition often preventing Americans from living their beliefs fully and religion should be considered more when governing. This concerns me because at the national and state level we have seen the politicians assume personal decision making responsibilities for individuals. Reproductive freedom is one of the blatant examples of this transfer of power.

With the upcoming election, this is the time to defend religious liberty, one of the founding cornerstones of our country. We must question the candidates. We must educate each other and young people in our lives about civic participation and issues that affect them. We must vote to protect our individual freedoms.

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slated for destruction must not be placed above persons whose pain and suffering might be alleviated due to the knowledge gained from studying embryonic cells. Embryonic stem cell research can help us find treatments and cures that could improve the quality of life for millions in Michigan. Many believe that this pursues the biblical mandate to care for each other, to tend to the sick and heal those in need.



October is Family Sexuality Education month

- Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children. Children want to talk about sex with their parents and they want to hear your values. Don't be afraid of being old-fashioned or embarrassed. You can tell your children that you find it hard to talk about these subjects, but do it because you love them.
- The most important step you can take is to say the first words. Children do not always ask questions about sexuality. So *you* must begin. Try after a TV program, news on the radio, or reading a magazine or newspaper article about AIDS.
- Try to answer your children's questions as they come up. It is never a good idea to tell children that they need to wait until they are older before you will answer their questions. If you don't know an answer, tell your child you will look it up and tell them later. Be sure to do so. With an older child, you might go to the library and look up the information together.
- Throughout your talks, be sure to talk about the joys of human sexuality. This might include telling them that sexuality is natural and healthy, that loving relationships are often the best part of life, and that intimate experiences can be a wonderful part of adult life.
- Let your children know that they can always ask you any questions they may have. Let them know you love them and want to help, even if they do things you

Thank You

We greatly appreciate your commitment to engage pro-choice clergy. Your financial contributions ensure a pro-choice voice in the faith community to protect the health of women, men, and teens. MIRCRC is a 501(c)4 and contributions are not tax-deductible.

may not like.

- Know what is taught about human sexuality and HIV/AIDS in your schools, place of worship, and youth groups.

From <http://www.thebody.com/content/art2412.html>

Tell Congress to Get REAL

The Responsible Education about Life Act (REAL) is federal legislation to provide money to states for programs that provide comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education. As people of faith, we believe it is a moral imperative to provide children and teens with complete information to make responsible and informed decisions about their health.

Abstinence-only education means that *only* abstinence is taught as a method for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Abstinence-plus means teaching abstinence as the only sure way to avoid pregnancy and STDs as well as teaching the benefits of contraception and protection. REAL incorporates that as well as encouraging family communication about sexuality and teaching negotiation skills for young people

In Michigan there were 19,669 estimated teen pregnancies in 2006. From 2000-2004, there was a significant increase in the proportion of teens between 13-19 diagnosed with HIV. We should be doing all we can to prevent teen pregnancies and the transmission of STDs.

The only congressional sponsors from Michigan for REAL are Sander Levin and Carolyn Kilpatrick. Please contact your congressional representatives and senators and urge them to get REAL!

Legislative Update

The Good

The Prevention First package was introduced in May.

HB 6048 (Warren) – *Same as SB 1355 by Jacobs.* Bill requires emergency rooms or urgent care clinics to offer emergency contraception to victims of sexual assault. The bill passed the House.

HB 6049 (Wheeler Smith) – *Same as SB 1357 by Cherry.* Bill requires pharmacists to fill prescriptions without bias.

HB 6050 *Same as SB 1356 by Brater.* Bill creates an emergency contraceptive education act.

HB 6051 (Bieda) – bill requires insurance coverage of pap tests in certain cases.

HB 6052 (Bieda) – bill requires health care corporation coverage of pap tests in certain cases.

The Bad

SB 776 After weeks of political maneuverings, Michigan's House passed Senate Bill 776. This bill copied the 2003 Federal Abortion Ban already in effect in Michigan. It was purely a political move by Michigan Right to Life (RTL) and served as a litmus test for candidates in the upcoming election. Governor Granholm vetoed the bill. Thanks to all of you who contacted your legislators.

Refusal provisions Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt proposed new guidelines that would greatly change reproductive health. In the guise of protecting religious liberty they honor the personal objections of some health care providers above the needs of women, which, through the denial of services, will force beliefs on women who do not share them. Specifically, the draft proposed regulations:

- Permit institutions as well as individuals to refuse to provide women access to contraceptive services and information;
- Permit health care providers to refuse to perform any service they deem morally objectionable.

Comments on these rule changes can be sent to consciencecomments@hhs.gov.



Talking About Choice with a Religious Voice: Election 2008

Expanding access to family planning services The low income and uninsured need affordable family planning services. A woman with low income is 4 times as likely to have an unintended pregnancy. Unintended pregnancy can perpetuate poverty, interrupt education and job opportunities, and create family hardship. My faith underlies my commitment to equality and justice and inspires me to work for accessible health care.

Funding comprehensive medically accurate sexuality education The federal government has spent over \$1 billion on ineffective abstinence-only programs that do not reduce teen sexual activity.

Requiring hospitals to offer emergency contraception (EC) to rape victims

For a woman who has been sexually assaulted or raped, timely access to emergency contraception could prevent the additional trauma of an unintended pregnancy. As a person of faith, I want to keep medical care free from sectarian doctrine and protect the inviolability of conscience in making personal health care decisions.

Requiring pharmacists to fill prescriptions for emergency contraception without delay

Pharmacist refusals to provide birth control, including EC are based on personal beliefs, not on legitimate medical or professional concerns. They interfere with equal access to health care products and services and undermine the inherent dignity of an individual's health care decisions.

The constitutional right to privacy which protects access to contraceptive services

The U.S. Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut* guaranteed the individual right to privacy in deciding whether and when to have a child. Major religions also oppose governmental interference in such private matters.



Looking ahead

September 24 – Rally for Choice at the Capitol in Lansing,
 10:00 am advocacy training
 11:00 am visit legislators
 12:00 pm rally at the Capitol steps
 For more information contact mircrc@mircrc.org

October 15 – Recipe and issue exchange at Edgewood Church, East Lansing, 5:30-7:00 pm.
 Bring your favorite appetizer and the recipe to share with others. As we munch, we will also discuss the upcoming election and candidate positions on reproductive health issues.

November 4 – Election day

November 20 – Volunteer night at Shaarey Zedek, East Lansing, 5:30-7:00 pm.

December 1—World AIDS Day

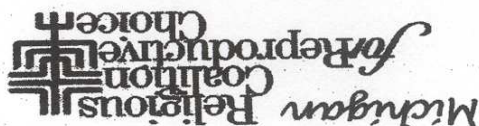
December 10—Human Rights Day

The Michigan Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice works to ensure reproductive choice through the moral power of religious communities. The Coalition seeks to be a representative of people of all faiths and beliefs and to give a clear voice to the reproductive issues of people of color, those living in poverty, youth, and underserved populations.

Please direct comments and questions about the newsletter and MIRCRC to the co-chairs Rev. Bob Frederick and Susan Grubb at mircrc@mircrc.org
 Or visit us online at <http://www.mircrc.org/>

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