

Faith & Choices

Pro-Faith, Pro-Choice News from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Fall 2007

From the President

Growing Our Influence

I am pleased to be able to announce the establishment of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice public policy department. Our new staff will allow us to continue advancing our reproductive justice work with decision-makers in Washington, DC.

Already, our new department has launched an initiative called "People of Faith for REAL" to promote comprehensive sexuality education legislation called the Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act. But the work of the public policy department cannot exist without you — the constituents who elect our members of Congress. We will continue to rely on you to contact your senators and representatives to encourage them to support the REAL Act and other issues important to the pro-faith, pro-choice community.

If you do not receive action alerts and regular updates from me via e-mail, I encourage you to sign up on our website, www.rcrc.org, or e-mail me at info@rcrc.org and ask to be added to my list.

You can read more about the battle for comprehensive sexuality education and the work of the new public policy department



Reverend Carlton W. Veazey



We've Expanded Our Policy Work and Hired Top Staffers

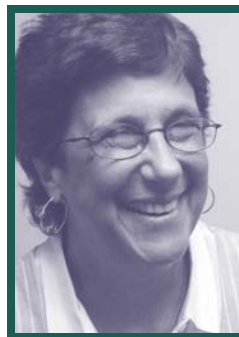
Thanks to the strong support for our policy initiatives, RCRC has established our first Public Policy Department. Two talented, experienced professionals have joined our staff. Ellen Sittenfeld Battistelli, an activist for women's and children's issues, is the department director, and Glenn Northern, an expert on state sex education policy, is the senior policy analyst.

The department will meet an urgent need, President Rev. Dr. Carlton W. Veazey said. "Supporters of reproductive choice and religious pluralism can no longer look to the Supreme Court to protect the health and well-being of a woman or respect the dignity of her wishes. The struggle to protect and advance reproductive rights, programs and services must be fought and won in the public policy arena. As people of faith, we have a central role."

RCRC's public policy activities have been steadily increasing. Clergy for Choice members have met with members of Congress about family planning services and medically accurate sex education. Our national office has submitted friend-of-the-court briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court to

provide religious perspectives on abortion cases. In 2006, the Clergy Leadership Institute for Reproductive Justice was started to empower more clergypersons to advocate for choice.

Ellen Battistelli has more than 25 years of experience in public policy and program development on women's and children's issues. She worked for ten years on Capitol Hill, including six years with former Representative Patricia Schroeder. She was legislative representative for the Planned



Ellen Sittenfeld Battistelli



Glenn Northern

Parenthood Federation of America for five years and most recently worked for the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association. She also served as senior policy analyst for the Child Welfare League of America, working to ensure access to health care for children and families in the child welfare system.

Glenn Northern has more than 13 years of experience with reproductive health and sex education issues and is committed to changing the policies that obstruct students from accessing reproductive health information. He has held positions at the Center for Policy Alternatives, The National Abortion

IN THIS ISSUE

Public Policy Update	3
Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion	4
Faith in Action	6
Resources.	7

*Remarks of Rev. Paul Britner, Unitarian
Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery,
July 21, 2007*

I'm wearing a clerical collar, not to offer finger-waging judgment, but to speak out for the religious freedom guaranteed by our Constitution, because for many women, the decision whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy is a deeply, profound moral issue and a question of faith.

When our founders enshrined religious freedom in the first amendment, they probably had no idea what a diverse and pluralistic society we would become. They probably never imagined that the United States Congress would have two Buddhists and a Moslem as members, not to mention two Unitarians. Not only are we rich in religious traditions, even our established traditions have become diverse. How can anyone say that religion itself is on one side or another knowing that Ted Kennedy and Pat Buchanan are both Catholics, that Mitt Romney and Harry Reid are both Mormons, and that George Bush and Hillary Clinton are both Methodists?

Sometimes the biggest barrier between people and God is religion itself. When religion comes between a person and his or her God, it may be crisis of faith. But, when government comes between a person and his or her faith, it's a constitutional crisis, and each and every one of us has a stake in protecting one another from such intrusions and in keeping the government out of our houses of worship and out of our own, personal moral decision-making.

If there is any place that reminds us of the importance of religious freedom, it is

Call to Justice

Alabama Reproductive Freedom Summer

Operation Save America (formerly Operation Rescue) descended on Birmingham, AL, this summer with the intention to shut down the women's clinics there. In its own words, OSA went to Birmingham to bring "the Gospel of Christ to the gates of hell - the abortion industry in Birmingham." The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice was there to debunk this irreligious propaganda and to stand up for the safety and dignity of women and the right of women's clinics to provide services. During the week of reproductive justice-related events, Rev. Paul Britner, from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery, gave the following remarks.

this place. We are gathered on hallowed ground, ground that has been consecrated by the blood of four young girls killed right over there in 1963: Addie May Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley. We stand in the historic shadow of that church, in the same park where fire hoses and vicious dogs were used in a futile attempt to preserve a corrupted system of injustice.

Today the cause is different, but the hate and the oppression are the same. There is a direct link between the murders of those four young girls and the bombing in 1998 at the New Women's clinic that killed Robert Sanderson and severely wounded Emily Lyons, and that link is hate and violence. Left unchecked, our adversaries in the political process would install their own corrupted system of injustice, and it is our task, indeed the task of every citizen who treasures liber-

ty, to remind them of the motto of this great State, "We Dare Defend Our Rights!"

Now, I don't know what those four young girls might think about abortion if they were here today. They might be carrying signs for the other side. But we'll never know that because they never had what it is that we are determined to preserve: the right of choice. They never got to choose someone to love. They never got to choose a career or a home, or whether to start a family or not. So, for Addie Mae Collins, will you fight for medically accurate information for women from their health care providers? For Denise McNair, will you fight for access to all forms of contraception? For Carole Robertson, will you fight for comprehensive sexuality education in our schools? And for Cynthia Wesley, will you fight for the right of every woman to make her own moral decisions?

Amen!

FAITH AND CONSCIENCE

Pro-choice religions are among the most trusted institutions in the United States. These traditions, with more than 20 million members in the U.S., support reproductive choice as the most responsible position a religious institution can take on this issue. The Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, and Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Judaism all have official statements in support of reproductive choice as a matter of conscience. Religious and religiously affiliated organizations from these and other traditions and independent religious organizations such as Catholics for a Free Choice are members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Public Policy Update

Dishonesty As The Basis for Education?

Real sex education is more than simply saying “no” to sex and more than simply teaching how to put on a condom. No one understands this more than people of faith, who grasp the transformative power and life-affirming potential of sexuality as well as the responsibilities and challenges that accompany it. At its best, sex education helps us understand who we are as people. Sex education can be richly rewarding when it is built on understanding ourselves and our relationships and is an honest exploration of our values within the context of family, faith and life goals. Unfortunately, the narrow programs that the federal government has chosen to fund too often discard truthfulness even while touting their moral superiority. These same abstinence-only programs often pronounce a single faith perspective as doctrine rather than encourage authentic dialogue and reflection.

Since honesty is a core dimension of every faith, misleading, distorted, and medically inaccurate programs are of grave concern to us all. Programs that distort information about contraception and other aspects of reproductive health fail to be honest with teens. Young people deserve better.

Update On Title V Abstinence-Only Funding

Three major streams of funding funnel money into abstinence-only programs nationwide. One stream, funded through Sec. 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act, provides the states with \$50 million. Like the others, it requires that programs adhere to a strict eight point definition of abstinence. States accepting Title V money must match every four dollars of federally invested money with three of their own state dollars.

Eight Point Definition of Abstinence:

- 1) has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, physiological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- 2) teaches that abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage is the expected standard for all school age children;
- 3) teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- 4) teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity;
- 5) teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- 6) teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;
- 7) teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and
- 8) teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

Over the last few years the program has become increasingly restrictive. From its inception in the 1996 “welfare reform” act, the definition of abstinence that guided Title V was so narrowly drawn and interpreted that it completely shut out programs focused on providing teens with complete, honest information that included information about contraception. Initially programs receiving Sec. 510 money simply had to be in compliance with all eight points of the definition but now, they are required to

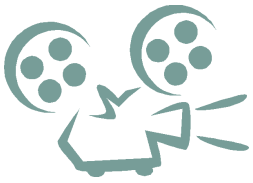
“meaningfully represent” all eight points. The effect of this tightening has finally led many elected officials to question the programs.

Despite their documented failings (what are you referring to?), abstinence-only programs have thrived. Over a billion dollars have been spent on them. Even so, there is little public support for these programs among teachers, clergy, the medical and public health communities, and parents whereas polls consistently show support for balanced, responsible sex education to be above 80 percent in nearly every demographic. Study after study has indicted abstinence-only programs for their distortions of medical information and their failures to change students’ sexual behaviors. Even with these failings, most states take abstinence-only money. Conversely, there is no dedicated funding stream for comprehensive sex education, despite a raft of evidence that it can be effective at delaying teen sexual activity and at increasing contraceptive use. The tide, however, is turning.

Momentum Against Abstinence-Only Programs Increases

While the case continues to build against abstinence-only programs, the programs are becoming even more restrictive and the number of states that have rejected funding has skyrocketed to 11. Some states like New Jersey issued very public rejections, stating that it conflicted with their own state policies around sex education. Others were quieter, but in each case, states rebuffed the federal government’s approach and felt the money was not a wise investment in its youth. . These are bold statements. Any state that turns down money takes an incredibly courageous stand. It says volumes about the onerous restrictions and inadequacies of abstinence-only programs that in the last two years the number of state rejecting Title V has quadrupled.

Congress has been slower to heed the



RCRC at the Movies

Whether you want to hold a community event or simply spend a relaxing evening at home curled up on the couch, enjoy a night at the movies with RCRC! Choose one of the films in our “RCRC Presents” movie guide, and take the time to explore how spiritual and reproductive justice issues are portrayed in popular culture.

Cider House Rules

Raised in an orphanage in rural Maine, Homer Wells is the protégé to Dr. Larch, who runs the orphanage and has taught Homer how to deliver babies. He also tries to teach Homer how to perform abortions, yet Homer wants nothing to do with the procedure. Homer leaves the orphanage to find himself and learns the danger of rules imposed by others.

Spiritual and Reproductive Justice

Issues Raised: The movie is rife with relevant issues: the ethics of abortion in pre-*Roe* America, the difficulties around both placing a child for adoption and adopting a child, and the need to challenge long held-principals in light of difficult situations.

Questions for Discussion:

- Who are the heroes of the story, and why?
- Dr. Larch sees Christianity as having “no use” at the orphanage and for the people he is helping. What role do you think spirituality or faith plays for Dr Larch and Homer in the decisions they make? What role would it play for you if faced with similar decisions?
- What did you notice about the way Homer and Dr. Larch talk about the women who come to the orphanage? They care for them, but do they respect them and their choices?

Dirty Dancing

It’s the summer of 1962, and Baby is spending the summer with her family at a Catskills resort. When one of the entertainment staff needs an abortion, Baby makes it possible by borrowing money from her father and by volunteering to take the girl’s place in a dance routine. She falls in love her dance partner as he teaches her how to dance and they both teach each other about what it means to stand up for what you believe.

Reproductive Issues Raised: The word “abortion” is never used in the movie, but it plays a pivotal role as a plot device, and the movie raises a number of interesting issues about abortion in the pre-*Roe* days. Class issues also play a pivotal part of the movie.

Questions for Discussion:

- When Baby uses her father’s money to pay for an abortion and then gets him to help when it goes wrong, he is outraged and feels betrayed. Why is abortion beyond the pale for him?
- If you’ve seen this movie before, how aware were you that a character had an abortion? Had you thought of this as a movie that raises issues of reproductive justice?
- What are the class issues at work in this movie, particularly around the abortion, and how do you think they reflect on similar issues in today’s reproductive justice movement?

Citizen Ruth

When Ruth is arrested for the use of illegal inhalant drugs, the judge is outraged to discover that she is pregnant. He threatens her with a felony conviction of willful endangerment of her fetus, and then privately suggests that she would save herself and the state a good deal of trouble if she would just “take care” of her problem. Her situation quickly becomes public knowledge and activists on both sides of the choice debate gear up for what they see as the biggest abortion fight since *Roe*.

Spiritual and Reproductive Justice

Issues Raised: Abortion and the politics around it are the heart and soul of this film. Deeply satirical, the movie has religious characters on both sides of the issue: the anti-choice folk are Christian and the pro-choice ones are Goddess worshippers and they both offer religion as a way to “heal” Ruth as well as falling back on their religion when their ideas are challenged.

Questions for Discussion:

- What do you see as the role of religion in the movie, and how could the religious communities have played a more positive role in helping Ruth?
- How did you react to the way the pro-choice activists were portrayed?
- What can we as reproductive justice activists do to make sure that we avoid the trap of focusing not just on the rights of “women,” but on each individual woman and her choices?

- If you hold an event, be sure to us know about it, and tell us how it goes!
- Let us know if our summaries and questions are helpful, and what other questions you would suggest.
- Are there other movies or TV show episodes that we should include?

With responses to these, or any other questions or comments, please contact Rev. Matthew Davis Fox, Mfox@rcrc.org.

“Keeping It Real!”

Latino Churches Welcome RCRC Sex Ed Program

Latino and Hispanic Christians are hearing important information about sexuality from the most respected institution in their community—the church. Despite great resistance from some churches, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice’s faith-based sex education program is bringing a new voice to teens and families about HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, and responsible sex. According to an article in the July 16 *Washington Post* about the program, church leaders say the program is desperately needed by Latino adolescents

The Spanish-language program is a tool to assist youth in communicating with their parents, family, and peers about sex. Biblical wisdom and discussions about values help teens sort through sexuality issues, with the guidance of trained facilitators. Youth learn the importance of each individual’s responsibility, as a sexual and spiritual being, to use God’s gift of sexuality respectfully. Churches across the spectrum—including Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal, and Pentecostal—say the program is helping families break the silence about sex issues and potentially reducing the risk of unintended pregnancy.

Reverend Bruce Rivera is a public health official and ordained minister in New York City’s South Bronx. He was the keynote speaker at RCRC’s fifth annual Latino Summit on Religion and Sexuality in 2006. The United Church of Christ minister says that the church and he as a minister have a responsibility to help their community, where people with HIV and AIDS are three times more likely to die than those in other communities. “If I am silent as a pastor of this congregation, then I will be held responsible for that silence.”

Silence about sex is the norm in many Latino and Hispanic families, according to



Photo caption goes here.

Reverend Evelyn Perez, who facilitates RCRC’s Spanish-language “Keeping It Real!” faith-based dialogues. Teens in the program are asked to talk to their parents about sexuality, but Reverend Perez says most students tell her their parents are embarrassed and

Silence about sex is the norm in many Latino and Hispanic families.

often avoid the conversations. Grace Delgado, an 18-year-old student and member of RCRC’s Advisory Committee for La Iniciativa Latina, says that, before becoming involved with “Keeping It Real!” she could never have had a discussion about sex with her father, an Episcopal priest. Father-daughter talks about sex are now possible, and Reverend Delgado has held “Keeping It Real!” dialogues in the church he pastors.

Grace Delgado feels that “Keeping It Real!” has made her church a more welcoming place and empowering place for youth, particularly for girls, who feel more secure after the dialogues. “If you’re secure about yourself you won’t just give into something you don’t really want to do. We want to have the power to say *No*,” Grace says.

Antonio Torres, also a member of La Latina Iniciativa Advisory Committee, is a social worker at Christ the King Catholic Church in the Bronx and a religious educator. He has found that the church is a good venue to reach Latino parents and youth. “Most people feel more confident when they come into the church. They are different when they go to a social service or health service provider.”

For information about “Keeping It Real!” and our other resources for Latino and Hispanic congregations, please call 202-628-7700 ext. 28 or visit our website at http://www.rcrc.org/programs/iniciativa_latina.cfm

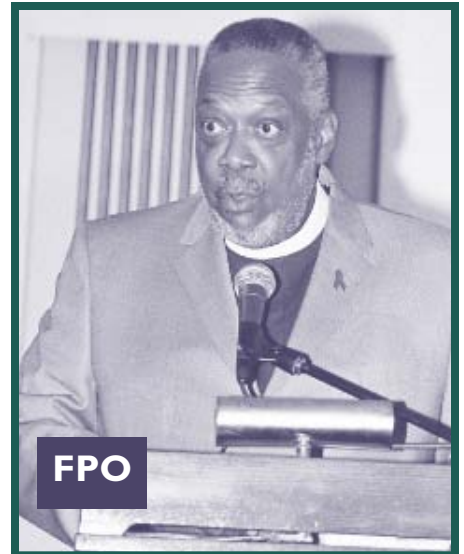
Faith in Action

Images of Fellowship at Sexuality Summit

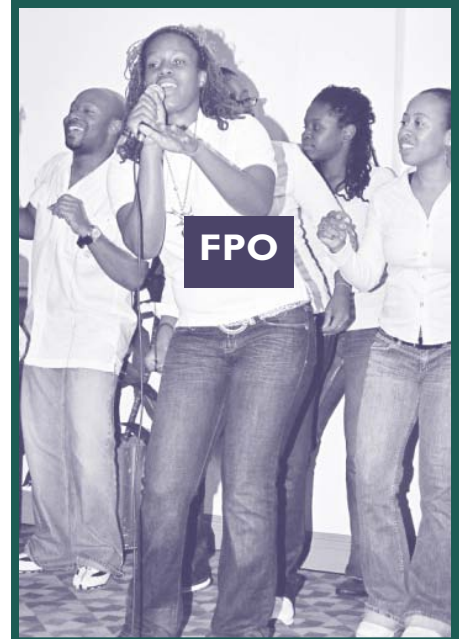
The eleventh annual National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality was held in July at Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, DC, and was, once again, a tremendous success. Black clergy, laity, and youth met to dialogue on critical issues affecting the African American community, including teen pregnancy, sexuality and religion, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and other issues of reproductive health. Over 400 adults and 200 youth attended the Summit, and for the first time, free and confidential HIV testing was available for all attendees.



Music, sermons and the Spirit move participants in the Thurman Chapel at Howard Divinity



Reverend Edwin Sanders provides spiritual provisions for the soul during a worship service.



The Urban Nation H.I.P. H.O.P. choir performs during the President's reception on July 10, 2007.

AHEM: NEED A SPEAKER?



We have launched a Speakers Bureau that will provide civic and religious groups with engaging, thoughtful, and faithful views on pro-faith, pro-choice issues. We have a variety of speakers who are experts on subjects related to reproductive healthcare, reproductive choice, reproductive justice, and religious freedom.

Representing a range of religious backgrounds, RCRC speakers can address issues from Christian, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist, and interfaith perspectives. RCRC speakers are appropriate for a forum, meeting, dinner, or rally, as well as other venues and events.

To find out if one of our speakers will fit with your event, please contact RCRC at info@rcrc.org or visit our Speakers Bureau webpage at <http://www.rcrc.org/issues/speakers.cfm>.

Resources for Action

Generation of Justice

The SYRF Regional Training Institute is an activist and organizing training program that will take place in four cities across the country between October 2007 and March 2008. Trainings are open to anyone ages 16-30 and will focus on campus and community activism. Whether you are an experienced SYRF activist or someone looking to learn the skills needed to share faithful/pro-choice views with your community, if you are young, spiritual, and pro-choice, you are encouraged to apply!

Trainings will be held in Washington, DC, Atlanta, San Francisco and Chicago and will feature intensive skills sessions designed to prepare participants to galvanize community support for reproductive justice in a faithful context.

SYRF Regional Trainings are completely free to accepted participants. Slots are limited, so apply today!

Participants in SYRF regional trainings will

- Explore the social justice approach to reproductive rights and health
- Learn what pesticides and affordable childcare have to do with access to birth control
- Hear from clergy and religious leaders from several faith traditions, including pro-choice Catholic activists, Hindu Swamis, Rabbis, and representatives from the Unitarian Universalist and Baptist communities
- Talk with communications experts about the best and most effective ways to talk about faith and reproductive justice
- Find out what the status of sex education legislation is in Washington today
- Discover why sex education is crucial to achieving reproductive justice and why religious support is so important

For more information on SYRF Regional Trainings, visit www.syrf.org or contact Emily Goodstein at info@syrf.org.



Young pro-choice activists gather for fellowship at a Washington, DC networking event.

Washington, DC: October 22-23, 2007
(APPLICATION DEADLINE: October 8, 2007)

Atlanta, GA: November 17-18, 2007
(APPLICATION DEADLINE: November 2, 2007)

San Francisco, CA: February 8-9, 2008
(APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 31, 2008)

Chicago, IL: March 3-4, 2008
(APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 18, 2008)

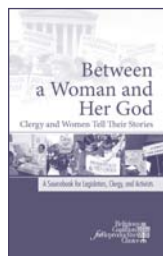
Support RCRC with pro-choice, pro-faith resources!

Show your Support!

- Pro-Faith, Pro-Family, Pro-Choice buttons (2" round) (\$2)
- Bumperstickers (\$2)
- Prayerfully Pro-Choice bumpersticker (\$2)
- T-shirts M L XL (\$15)



Educational Resources



- Between a Woman and Her God: Clergy and Women Tell Their Stories (\$10)
- Words of Choice – a 24-page glossary of pro-choice language (\$5)
- Education Series Kit (\$10)
- Speak Out for Choice Activist Kit (\$5)



Contributions

- I'm enclosing a special contribution of \$_____.
- Send me information about supporting the Religious Coalition through my will or other planned giving strategy.
- Contact me with more information about becoming a monthly donor.

You can also contribute on our convenient, secure online service at www.rcrc.org.

Resources

- Send me your list of publications and resources.
- Send me the biweekly email newsletter, National Report. My email address is: _____.
- Tell me about Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF).
- I'd like information about "Keeping It Real!" the Christian sexuality education curriculum for African-American youth ages 13 to 17.
- I'm interested in joining the Clergy for Choice Network.
- I'm interested in joining Seminarians for Choice.

**Please mail this form, along with payment, in the enclosed envelope.
Thank you for your support of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice!**

For more RCRC resources, or to order online, visit our online store at www.rcrc.org/issues/resources.cfm.



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GET INVOLVED! Contact Your State Affiliate

An intense struggle is going on at the state level, with new legislation limiting access to reproductive health care traveling from state to state until enough momentum develops to bring it to the national arena. In such a climate, we need active state organizations to stop each new threat as it arises. Religious Coalition affiliates are involved in a variety of advocacy, education, and community service programs. Being part of an affiliate means that you are able to work together with people of all faiths to protect reproductive choice. Please join us in this important work. For more information, contact bkavadias@rccrc.org or 202-628-7700.

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 rccrcncal@hotmail.com

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 (213) 748-0200
 www.rccrcsc.org

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 www.cocrcc.org

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 (203) 637-4649
 rccrcfct@aol.com

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 rccrcflorida@yahoo.com

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 religiouscoalition@georgiansforchoice.org

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 www.nmrccrc.org

New York
 (914) 723-7273
 www.nyrcrc.org

Ohio
 (1-800) 587-2330 (in OH)
 www.ohiorccrc.org

Oklahoma
 (918) 481-6444
 www.okrccrc.org

Pennsylvania
 (215) 438-2825
 www.yrccpa.org

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 wi_rccrc@yahoo.com

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice Member Organizations

The names of members are in **bold**.

Christian

Episcopal Church
Presbyterian Church
 (USA)
Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options
Washington Office
Women's Ministries
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church
General Board of Church and Society
General Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division

Caucuses/Organizations
Catholics for a Free Choice

Christian Lesbians Out
Church of the Brethren
Womaen's Caucus
Disciples for Choice
Episcopal Urban Caucus
Episcopal Women's Caucus
Lutheran Women's Caucus
Methodist Federation for Social Action
YWCA of the USA

Jewish

Conservative
Rabbinical Assembly
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Reform
Central Conference of American Rabbis
North American Federation of Temple Youth
Union for Reform Judaism
Women of Reform Judaism, The Federation of Temple Sisterhoods

Women's Rabbinic Network of the Central Conference of American Rabbis
Reconstructionist
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Society for Humanistic Judaism

Caucuses/Organizations

American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
Hadassah, WZOO
Jewish Women International
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women
Women's American ORT

Ethical Culture

National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union

Unitarian Universalist

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice brings the moral power of religious communities to ensure reproductive choice through education and advocacy. The Coalition seeks to give clear voice to the reproductive issues of people of color, those living in poverty, and other under-served populations.

Overset, From the President

on page 3.

Thank you for keeping the faith for choice!

Overset, Lead article, page 1

Federation, and The Guttmacher Institute as well as Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA). For the last four years, he was the sexuality education policy manager at PPFA, where he helped state groups implement comprehensive sex education policies in their communities.

Overset, Public Policy Update, page 3

picture. In August, after brief extension , the House proposed a two-year extension with significant changes. Whether these changes will be adopted or the program scrapped still remains to be seen as the program is currently operating under a temporary three month extension that lapses in December. The proposed changes required programs to be medically and scientifically accurate and to prove their effectiveness at decreasing teen pregnancy, STD and HIV/AIDS rates. States would also have the flexibility to use funds for more comprehensive programs which discuss abstinence but also include information about contraception. These are all changes that on paper remedy some of the most severe problems with the Title V program but in practice would be significantly difficult to enforce, especially given the Department of Health and Human Services lackadaisical oversight of the abstinence- programs cited in the GAO report from 2006. Many advocates within the community called for a total elimination of the program but for now their program will survive through the year at least and possibly for two more years.

Regardless of the changes or even elimination of Title V this year, abstinence-only programs will still be able to impart their false information to young people. The other two streams of funding still flourish. As long as the Community Based Abstinence Education stream, the largest pot of abstinence-only money, remains fully intact and functioning, our work as people of faith standing up for honest education will continue.