

# Faith & Choices

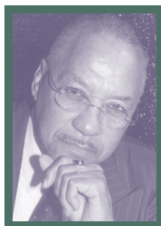
News from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Summer 2009

## From The President

### Culture of Fear Will Not Prevail

*“Together, we will create a society and a paradigm shift so that every pregnancy is an invited guest in the woman’s body and a welcome addition to her family.”*



## Rev. Veazey Urges Obama Administration To Support All Options

**R**CRC’s president is urging the Obama administration’s faith-based office to focus on preventing unintended pregnancy while supporting all options when women have an unintended pregnancy.

“Women confronting an unintended pregnancy are often faced with difficult choices—the pain of giving up a child for adoption, the financial or personal inability to raise a child, or the sadness of terminating a pregnancy. We know that it is the woman who must make the decision about what is in the best interest of herself and her family, and we urge the administration to support women in every way possible,” says Reverend Dr. Carlton W. Veazey.

Reverend Veazey has asked administration officials to take a balanced approach—supporting education and prevention and keeping abortion services legal and safe and abortion providers protected from violence.

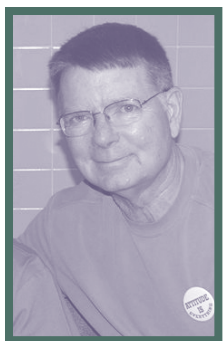
The administration has held a series of high-level meetings with religious and community leaders on social issues including reducing unintended pregnancy and promoting options other than abortion. Reverend Veazey welcomes support for parenting women such as quality, accessible maternal and child health services but wants to ensure that nothing is done to denigrate the option of abortion. He has also been a leader in making the case for funding comprehensive sexuality education and contraceptive services to prevent unintended and teen pregnancies.

The goal, as President Obama said in his commencement address at Notre Dame University in May, is for everyone concerned about abortion to work together in a spirit of understanding and civility to find common ground. However, in a statement to the news media on President Obama’s remarks, Reverend Veazey said:

“My experience of 13 years in the pro-choice movement is that ‘common ground’ has become another term for compromise on reproductive choice. In other words, achiev-



*President Obama talked about “common ground” at Notre Dame commencement.*



**S**o said the late Dr. George Tiller (left), who dedicated his life to making sure that safe, legal abortion was available to women in the greatest need.

This advocate for reproductive choice was murdered May 31 in the foyer of the church in Wichita, Kansas, where he was an usher and his wife sang in the choir. The alleged murderer has a long history of virulent opposition to abortion rights. We send our prayers to Dr. Tiller’s family, friends, and staff. And we also send a message to all purveyors of hate that violence will not be tolerated. The culture of fear will not prevail.

Peace and Blessings,

*Carlton W. Veazey*

Reverend Dr. Carlton W. Veazey

Page 3: An appreciation of Dr. Tiller

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## Rev. Veazey Asks Administration to Focus on All Options

*(continued from page 1)*

ing common ground will be accomplished by diminishing the ability of women to make decisions about abortion, whatever the personal cost. That's unacceptable.

“It's unacceptable for even one woman to suffer in order for opponents of abortion to be appeased.

“In our democracy, we believe in standing up for the rights of the disenfranchised, the vulnerable, those without power; we don't compromise them away. We should not sacrifice women's lives in the service of calming controversy and tempering anger over an issue that has become political....

“The President rightly wants us to lower the decibel level of the debate over abortion. But he also acknowledged that there are ‘irreconcilable differences’ over abortion between the ‘two camps.’ Now, if you accept that women are full persons in the eyes of God and the law and if you understand justice to include equality, then you cannot stop working for women's control over childbearing.

“The question now, as the Obama administration attempts to work out policies to reduce unintended pregnancy, is how to reach a respectful agreement that honors these differences, not how to back down gracefully.”

Finding common ground about abortion among political opponents is complicated, Reverend Veazey said, because a decision about abortion is personal and private, made by an individual woman who considers her personal circumstances. In discussions about common ground, the administration should not sacrifice women's moral agency to ease tensions between opposing camps.

At this time, administration officials seem to be taking a broader view of the issue—seeking to provide support for women rather than merely reducing the number of abortions. RCRC is monitoring developments and urges our members to check our website and read our email alerts and print communications for the latest information. To receive our emails, contact [publicpolicy@rcrc.org](mailto:publicpolicy@rcrc.org).

## FAITH AND CONSCIENCE

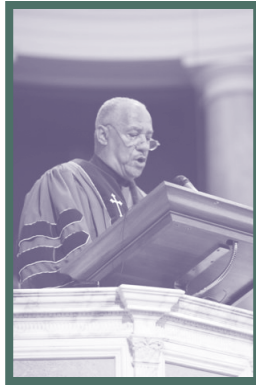
Pro-choice religions are among the most trusted institutions in the United States. These traditions, with more than 20 million members in the U.S., support reproductive choice as the most responsible position a religious institution can take on this issue. The Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), 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 are members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

# Faith in Action

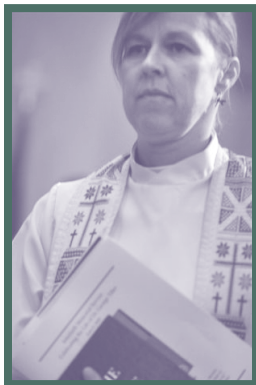
## RCRC Memorial Service Honors Dr. George Tiller's Life

**R**CRC's memorial service in the nation's capital for Dr. George Tiller brought together social justice advocates from across the country to celebrate the life of this good doctor, a champion of women's rights, talented and caring physician, devoted man of faith, military veteran, and loving husband, father and grandfather. Dr. Tiller—who was murdered Sunday, May 31, as he handed out worship bulletins in his church in Wichita, Kansas—was a humble, courageous man who dedicated his life to justice, liberty and freedom. He put his life on the line every day to make sure that safe, legal abortions were available to women in the greatest need, women with late-term complications and emergencies, who often had nowhere else to turn. He did so in respect for each woman he served and in the service of a noble cause—preserving the promise of reproductive freedom for all women.

Dr. Tiller had a powerful vision that sustained his daily actions. In a letter thanking RCRC for our support during the assault on his Wichita clinic in the summer of 2001, he wrote: "Together, we will create a society and a paradigm shift so that every pregnancy is an invited guest in the woman's body and a welcome addition to her family."



*Reverend Veazey praised Dr. Tiller for his selfless dedication to women's rights.*



*Reverend Karen Brau, senior pastor of Luther Place Memorial Church, offered words of comfort at the service.*

He was selfless and fearless in the line of danger to the very end. He believed and taught his staff that "Abortion is not a cerebral or a reproductive issue. Abortion is a matter of the heart: for until one understands the heart of a woman, nothing else about abortion makes any sense at all." His death was senseless, but his life will live on in the spirit of community, service, and compassion that we share.

Dr. Tiller was proud of his military service to his country and to the cause of freedom—and he felt that providing abortion services was part of this country's commitment to upholding women's rights and democracy. He hung an American flag at the clinic every day. After that summer assault on his clinic, he suggested to an RCRC staff member that those who harassed and threatened abortion providers and women needing services were tyrannical—and he felt that in providing services, no matter the danger and difficulty, he was standing up to tyranny.

George Tiller was continually harassed—his home, church and clinic were picketed, his clinic was burned down, he was shot in both arms by a demonstrator who is now jailed, and he was recently targeted for investigation only to be acquitted by a jury just a few months ago. But he never backed down.

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## IN MEMORIAM

George Tiller was born in Wichita at Wesley Hospital, where he later became president of the medical staff. He attended the University of Kansas on a swimming scholarship, completed a degree in zoology in 1963, and graduated from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 1967. He served his medical internship at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton, California. He graduated from the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute Flight Surgeon School and became a U.S. Navy flight surgeon.

In 1970, after the death of his father in a plane crash, Dr. Tiller returned to Wichita to assume his father's family medical practice, which had included providing abortions to a small number of women over the years. George Tiller's practice was guided by the values of "Kindness, Courtesy, Justice, Love and Respect."

Dr. Tiller's clinic was a warm, welcoming place. Once past the gauntlet of angry demonstrators, women found a compassionate staff, a well-run medical practice, and the sense they were respected and safe. Dr. LeRoy Carhart, RCRC Board member and plaintiff in two U.S. Supreme Court cases against abortion bans, said that Dr. Tiller never encouraged a woman to have an abortion but he was always there to ensure it would be safe. Dr. Carhart assisted at the Tiller clinic.

Concerned about his patients' total well-being, Dr. Tiller was the first abortion provider to install a chapel in his clinic, and he had a chaplain on duty for his patients.

# Public Policy Update

## Health Care Reform Must Include Reproductive Care

**T**he crisis of health care in America is one that should serve as a call to action for people of faith and conscience. More than 47 million Americans are uninsured and, as a result, have problems getting needed medical care and are in poor health. Millions more who do have health insurance must fight for reimbursement of their medical expenses or are drowning in medical bills.

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is committed to a health care reform plan that guarantees equal access to comprehensive, high-quality, affordable health care for all. This is a fundamental issue of justice.

Reproductive health is a key determinant of women's overall health. Currently, most private health plans recognize the essential nature of reproductive health to women's overall health by including the full range of reproductive health services. According to the Guttmacher Institute, virtually all women have used a contraceptive method and one in three women have had an abortion. These services are needed and popularly supported. Treatments and services that promote reproductive health throughout a woman's life must be part of any national health plan. These include contraceptive services, maternity care, pre- and post-partum care, abortion care, and screenings for sexually transmitted infections and reproductive cancers.

As Congress moves forward with legislation to reform the nation's health care system, we can expect a few, powerful organizations including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to politicize women's reproductive health care by pressing divisive debates around abortion.

The bishops have warned that including abortion as a health care benefit will jeopardize passage of national health care reform. But it's the bishops and their allies who will block health care reform if it includes comprehensive reproductive health services.

Reproductive health care is basic care for women.

RCRC's view is that abortion and contraception care should not be treated any differently than any other health care service. Coverage decisions should be left to a council of non-partisan health experts and should be grounded in science and based on the best interest of patients.

Please be sure to let your Members of Congress know that you support comprehensive health care reform by using the RCRC online advocacy system at [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org).

## Obama Budget Takes Important Steps Forward

**P**resident Obama's 2010 budget is a blueprint for reproductive health and sexuality education progress in the coming fiscal year. The budget contains tremendously important steps for the health and well-being of women and young people that take us out of the darkness of the past eight years and move us into the light.

The budget eliminates funding for abstinence-only programs, provides funding for proven teen pregnancy prevention programs, allows states to

expand eligibility for Medicaid family planning services, and increases funding for international family planning and reproductive health care by \$46 million. While we are disappointed that unfair government restrictions on funding abortion for poor women continue (Hyde Amendment), these budget measures are hopeful signs of better days to come for all the nation's women and youth.

President Obama is proposing to increase funding for the Title X family planning program (publicly supported family planning services) to \$317 million. This is a very modest increase of \$10 million, which is troubling considering the president's focus on preventing unintended pregnancy and reducing the need for abortion. The Title X program has effectively addressed these issues for nearly 40 years yet is seriously under funded.

President Obama proposes to spend \$110 million under a new rubric of teen pregnancy prevention programs. Although the budget fails to include comprehensive sex education, the hope is that such programs will be found eligible for these funds.

The Adolescent Family Life program will be funded at \$13 million, the same level as in FY09. The abstinence-only language has been rewritten to allow funding for programs that have been proven through rigorous evaluation to delay sexual activity, increase contraceptive use (without increasing sexual activity), or reduce teenage pregnancy.

As the budget goes through the congressional appropriations process, RCRC will work to ensure that the beliefs of diverse faith traditions are respected and universal access to reproductive health care—especially for poor and vulnerable populations—is furthered.

## RCRC Brings Voices of Faith To the Halls of Congress

**W**ith the Obama administration's emphasis on bringing more religious voices into the public arena, RCRC has become a "go-to" organization on reproductive choice and religion. Since the 111th Congress got underway in January, a host of Members of Congress have supported and participated in RCRC events, including Representatives Janice Schakowsky (D-Illinois), Diana DeGette (D-Colorado), Louise Slaughter (D-New York), Barbara Lee (D-California), Steve Cohen (D-Tennessee), and Paul Tonka (D-New York).

Congressional staff learned about the religious and moral values that motivate many people to support reproductive health, rights, and justice at two RCRC events—our congressional briefing, "You've Got to Have Faith: Building a Movement for Reproductive Justice," and our reception honoring members of Congress for their support of women and children.

RCRC President Reverend Dr. Carlton W. Veazey emphasized that reproductive justice involves ministering to the whole person and often helping a woman deal with relationships, education, jobs, and other daily struggles, not only assisting her at the moment of a crisis pregnancy.

Reproductive injustice has a greater effect on lower-income women, women of color and other vulnerable populations. Right now—when many people have lost their job-related health insurance—the lack of adequate publicly supported family planning services places lower-income women at an even greater disadvantage. Similarly, denying access to reproductive health information and services limits a woman's ability to direct her own life.

RCRC's leadership in addressing the needs of women of color, youth, and other underserved populations is especially important now, when reproductive health



*Left: (L-R) Rev. Dr. Carlton W. Veazey, Jessica Gonzales-Rojas of National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Sammie Moshenberg of National Council of Jewish Women, Toni Bond Leonard of Black Women for Reproductive Justice, Loretta Ross of SisterSong briefed Congressional staffers about the need for faithful voices in the reproductive justice movement.*



*Right: (L-R) Representative Janice Schakowsky (D-Illinois) and RCRC Board Chair Carol Blowers talk at RCRC's reception for members of Congress.*

disparities are increasing. The impact of these disparities is enormous. Compared to her higher income counterpart, a low-income woman is

- four times as likely to have an unintended pregnancy,
- five times as likely to have an unintended birth, and
- more than four times as likely to have an abortion.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), which affect the ability to bear children, disproportionately impact the poor, adolescents and people of color. Nearly half of young African American are infected with an STD, compared to 20% of young white women.

Medically accurate sexuality education and access to family planning and contraceptive services are critical in breaking the cycle of poverty for women, children, and families, said Reverend Veazey. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to live in poverty than other teens. Two-thirds of teen mothers never graduate from high school. The sons of teen mothers are 13% more likely to end up in prison. Teen daughters are 22% more likely to become teen mothers themselves. Without vast improvements in education and services, we will continue to perpetuate a cycle of poverty, he said.

## Congress Tops U.S. In Religious Affiliation

**A** study reported by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that there is at least one major difference between Congress and the nation as a whole: Members of Congress are much more likely to say they are affiliated with a particular religion. Only five members of the new Congress did not specify a religious affiliation; no members specifically said they were unaffiliated. By contrast, one-sixth (16%) of the adult population of the United States is not affiliated with a particular faith, making this one of the largest "religious" groups in the country.

Collectively, Protestants account for more than half (54.7%) of the 111th Congress, about the same percentage as their share of the U.S. adult population (51.3%). When Protestant denominations are considered individually, Catholics are the largest religious group in the 111th Congress, holding about 30% of the seats (whereas they are about one-quarter of the population). Jews, who account for just 1.7% of the U.S. adult population, make up 8.4% of Congress, including just over 13% of the Senate.

# Clergy for Choice—Compassionate Counselors

## An Abiding Faith in Women

**R**CRC Clergy for Choice’s training program helps clergy to assist women at a difficult time in their life. Not only do clergy help each woman they speak to consider the emotional, relational, medical, financial, and legal aspects of a pregnancy-related decision, they also help her consider spiritual questions within the context of her own faith tradition.

Counseling women requires bravery, strength, and limitless compassion. Most of all, it requires an abiding faith in the ability of women to make moral decisions in the best interest of themselves and their families. These recent real-life cases give a glimpse of how this unique and essential service works. Both cases began with a call to the RCRC national office.

### Addressing Spiritual Abuse

A woman left a message on the RCRC voicemail system—she said wanted to speak to someone about religious issues involved in a decision she was trying to make about being pregnant. A clergy person on RCRC’s national staff spoke with her almost immediately. She had decided to have an abortion and felt comfortable with her decision, but when she went to the clinic, she found herself at a so-called crisis pregnancy center instead. Many of these centers use misleading advertising to lure women, in hopes they can be dissuaded from having an abortion. In this case, the woman had been shown her sonogram images and told that Jesus loved her baby and that terrible things would happen should she “break God’s law.”

The spiritual abuse that she received at that center left her shaken. She and the RCRC clergy counselor talked about different ways of understanding what she was going through. The counselor assured her that God loved her and understood why she was making this decision. They talked and prayed together about her



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compassion.

understanding of God and what she wanted to do from here. She decided she wanted to go ahead with the termination. The counselor made sure she was put in touch with clergy who are trained in post-reproductive loss counseling so that they can support her and help her through this time.

### Overcoming Fear

A father of a 20-year old daughter called our office, searching for a pro-choice clergy person who could help his daughter deal with spiritual issues she was facing. Her situation was very difficult. Her boyfriend had kicked her out of their home. She had lost her job, yet another victim of these challenging economic times. She was fortunate to have a loving family to turn to, and her parents agreed to help her go back to school so she could work towards a brighter future. Then she found out she was pregnant. Her pro-life peers began to berate her. They told her “her womb would be cursed” if she had an abortion. She believed in God but in her panic, lost her sense that God was with her.

In a desperate attempt to find his daughter trustworthy counsel, her father searched the internet—and found the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The pain in his voice was evident as he told a clergy person on our staff his concerns about his daughter’s emotional and spiritual distress. After talking with him for about 30 minutes, our staff member located a pro-choice clergy counselor in the daughter’s community and also provided valuable information about the termination procedure as she headed into her 12th week. When we called the father back, he was overwhelmed with relief and gratitude.

## How You Are Helping

Thanks to our supporters, RCRC offers resources to clergy who provide non-judgmental, faith-informed resources to women facing reproductive issues that include infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, adoption, and unintended pregnancy:

- In-depth training and support for clergy in search of information.
- Courses on “Theology and Reproductive Choice” at seminaries and other religious institutions, for seminarians and clergy to explore the spiritual implications of one of our society’s most complex and challenging issues.
- “Faith and Choices” Action Kits to help clergy speak with their congregations on difficult subjects of sexuality—and support congregations in becoming more active advocates for choice.

For more information, contact [info@rcrc.org](mailto:info@rcrc.org) or 202-628-7700 ext. 30.

# Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom

## Pro-Choice— and Mormon

**A**ndrea Gleaves is pro-choice—and she is a practicing Mormon. The 23-year-old Utah native wants to spread the word that it's perfectly consistent to be pro-choice and Mormon. Andrea and the Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF) program are a great partnership. Through SYRF—RCRC's youth and young adult program—Andrea is finding opportunities in areas with a large Mormon population to share her views, something she could not have done through most other pro-choice programs.

Andrea is a recent graduate of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. After working on the Obama campaign last fall, she heard about SYRF's "Sexuality Education Superstar" campaign and got in touch with SYRF Director Emily Goodstein. Immediately, the two knew they had a common



mission—educating people about Andrea's perspective as a pro-choice Mormon.

"Mormons have a strong stance on free agency, on people making their own choices and being accountable," Andrea says. "My church has come out in support of contraception and teaches that abortion is allowed in certain situations." A decision about abortion involves "a woman and her relationship with the heavenly father," she says.

Andrea grew up in a small, conservative town with her mother, a single parent. "There wasn't much understanding of a single mom, and it took a lot of bravery to get out of that situation," she recalls. But she was always outspoken and fairly liberal. In college, she became more comfortable with being pro-choice and an advocate for women and could "go to church on Sunday and defend myself." She also worked with pregnant teens in Los Angeles, which gave her a greater understanding of abortion and made her more open-minded on the subject. "I wouldn't condemn a woman having an abortion whereas others might do so. Abortion is a difficult decision no matter what."

As her faith teaches, people should be able to make their own decisions. "Everyone should have the knowledge they need. If we had comprehensive sexuality education, there would be fewer abortions," she says.

## For, By, About Youth

Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF) educates, organizes and empowers youth and young adults (ages 16-30) to put their faith into action and advocate for pro-choice social justice. SYRF is on campuses and in high schools, congregations, and communities.

SYRF creates venues for youth education and activism, designs youth-specific materials, and builds lasting relationships with youth-oriented organizations, campus clergy, and youth programs of RCRC member denominations.

Learn more about SYRF :  
[www.syrf.org](http://www.syrf.org) or 202-628-7700

## Support RCRC with Pro-Choice, Pro-Faith Resources!

### Show Your Support!

Pro-Faith, Pro-Family, Pro-Choice buttons (2" round)

Pro-Faith, Pro-Family, Pro-Choice bumpersticker

Both of the above: Suggested \$2 donation each

### Educational Resources

Words of Choice—a 24-page glossary of pro-choice language (\$5)

Education Series Kit (\$10)

Speak Out for Choice Activist Kit (\$5)

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### Resources

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\* 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](http://www.rcrc.org/issues/resources.cfm).**



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### 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 underserved populations.

## Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice Member Organizations

The names of members are in bold.

#### Christian

United Church of Christ  
 General Board of Church  
 and Society, United  
 Methodist Church  
 General Board of Global  
 Ministries, Women's  
 Division, United  
 Methodist Church  
 Episcopal Church  
 Presbyterian Church (USA)  
*Caucuses/Organizations*  
 Catholics for Choice  
 Christian Lesbians Out  
 Church of the Brethren  
 Women's Caucus  
 Disciples for Choice  
 Episcopal Urban Caucus  
 Episcopal Women's Caucus  
 Lutheran Women's Caucus  
 Methodist Federation for  
 Social Action

#### 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  
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*Caucuses/Organizations*  
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 American Jewish Congress  
 Anti-Defamation League  
 of B'nai B'rith  
 Hadassah, WZOA  
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 Jewish Women  
 Women's American ORT  
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National Service  
 Conference of the  
 American Ethical Union

Unitarian Universalist  
 Association of  
 Congregations  
 Continental Unitarian  
 Universalist Young Adult  
 Network  
 Unitarian Universalist  
 Women's Federation  
 Young Religious Unitarian  
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### Make Your Voice Heard in Washington!

Send your email address to  
 publicpolicy@rcrc.org  
 and you'll receive our action alerts.

## 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 info@rcrc.org or 202-628-7700.

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