

Pro-Choice RELIGIOUS AMERICANS SPEAK OUT

For Justice and Dignity, End the Hyde Amendment

People of Faith Issue 'Call to Conscience' to End Discriminatory Measure

*Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the
poor and needy.*
- Proverbs 31:9

Throughout history, prophets of all faiths have shown a special concern for people in poverty and need. Honoring this tradition, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice marks the 30th year of the Hyde Amendment with a "call to conscience" to end this discriminatory and punitive measure.

The Hyde Amendment, which was passed by Congress in 1976, forbids federal Medicaid funding for abortion. The only exceptions are in cases of rape, incest, and danger to the life of the woman. Most states have also banned state Medicaid funding for abortion. Before the Hyde Amendment, federal Medicaid covered over one-third of all abortions. Since 1977 it has paid for virtually none.

Bans on abortion funding most severely affect poor women, women of color, and young women. Historically, many women who could not obtain legal abortions paid with their lives. The first documented case connected with the Hyde Amendment is that of Rosie Jiménez, a young mother who crossed the border into Mexico in 1977 in search of an affordable illegal abortion when denied Medicaid funding at home. She died of sepsis in a hospital in Texas, with a college scholarship check, uncashed, still in her purse.

If we could, we would immediately alleviate women's poverty—and need for Medicaid—with education, job training and a living wage,

affordable healthcare and childcare, safety from physical and sexual abuse, and access to quality, voluntary contraception. Until that time, all women should have the option of a safe, legal abortion, regardless of income.

Faithful Response to Economic Discrimination

Religious denominations with millions of members affirm that health care services, including abortion, should be available to all, regardless of income. These denominations have various views on when abortion is permissible, but all agree that women should have that option. These are brief excerpts of their official statements; the full statements are available on the websites.

United Methodist Church

www.interpretermagazine.org

The Resolution on Responsible Parenthood advises churches and society at large to "...make abortions available to women without regard to economic status..."

Presbyterian Church USA

www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/problem-pregnancies.pdf

"Within this same context of the state's limited legitimate interest (in regulating abortions and in restricting abortions in certain circumstances), no law should deny access to safe and affordable services for the persons seeking to terminate a problem pregnancy."

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Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

www.elca.org/socialstatements/abortion/

“The position of this church is that, in cases where the life of the mother is threatened, where pregnancy results from rape or incest, or where the embryo or fetus has lethal abnormalities incompatible with life, abortion prior to viability should not be prohibited by law or by lack of public funding of abortions for low income women.”

Episcopal Church

www.episcopalarchives.org

“Resolved, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church express its unequivocal opposition to any legislative, executive or judicial action on the part of local, state, or national governments that abridges the right of a woman to reach an informed decision about the termination of pregnancy or that would limit the access of a woman to safe means of acting on her decision.”

Reform Judaism

[www.urj.us/cgi-](http://www.urj.us/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=reproductive&year=1990f)

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In 1990, the Reform movement reaffirmed its commitment to “Support non-restrictive federal and state funding of reproductive services, including abortion, and non-restrictive private insurer coverage.”

Current Medicaid Coverage of Abortion

- 32 states ban state Medicaid for abortion. They are legally required to provide coverage in cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, but usually fail to do so.
- 1 state provides coverage only in cases of life endangerment.
- 17 states provide state Medicaid coverage of abortion for poor women in most cases.

The History

In 1973, the Supreme Court held in *Roe v. Wade* that the constitutional right of personal privacy includes the decision to have an abortion. In that year, federal Medicaid paid for approximately 270,000 abortions out of a total of 615,800 performed in the U.S. Now, with federal funding for abortion

virtually ended, only 17 states provide Medicaid funding for abortion. Today, some 6 million women of reproductive age (15-44) depend on Medicaid for their health care. Because of the Hyde Amendment and state bans on funding, the majority of these women are denied coverage for abortion.

Abortion funding is also denied to many other women who receive health care through the government, including federal employees, women in the military and Peace Corps, disabled women, residents of the District of Columbia, Native women using the Indian Health Service, and federal prisoners.

Reproductive Justice

By singling out abortion for exclusion, government has created a two-tiered system of healthcare in which poor and low-income women do not have the same ability to make personal decisions about abortion as those who can afford services or have private insurance. We believe this is fundamentally unfair. For women, justice must include the ability to make decisions about bringing a child into the world, without coercion and with the full support of family and society. In a more just world, all women would have the ability and resources to make personal decisions about their families and their lives. A woman would know that she has options in cases of unintended or unwelcome pregnancy — regardless of her economic status.

Source for all data: National Network of Abortion Funds

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice — comprising Protestant, Jewish, and other denominations and faith groups, the Clergy for Choice Network, and state affiliates throughout the country — works to ensure reproductive choice through the moral power of religious communities. All programs seek to give clear voice to the reproductive health issues of people of color, those living in poverty, and other underserved populations.

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