

NCJW UPDATE

FALL 2007

National Council of Jewish Women / Los Angeles Section

NCJW's Campaign for Contraceptive Access

Plan 

 Although the twentieth century saw women make great strides toward equality and freedom, today, nearly 90 years after we gained the vote and 34 years after *Roe v. Wade*, we are still being denied the right to contraceptive information and reproductive health services. **Plan A** is the National Council of Jewish Women's national campaign to empower and educate individuals to advocate for universal access to contraceptive information and health services for women.

Plan A seeks to give women, and others, the right to determine which health services they want and works to bring to light the difficulties women have obtaining contraceptives. It also promotes comprehensive sexuality education with medically accurate, age appropriate content that, while promoting abstinence as the only sure way to avoid STIs and pregnancy, also provides students with accurate information on contraceptive options.

Many women, especially in California, are not aware of the struggle in other parts of the country to obtain access to contraceptives. Currently, we know of at least 19 states where women have faced **Pharmacy Refusal**. In these cases, women have faced pharmacists who have either refused to sell women contraceptives or have lectured or have given false information about side effects of contraceptives. These pharmacists, because of their religious and moral beliefs, are discriminating against women. Four states have condoned this behavior allowing pharmacists, and in some instances, other health-care

providers to refuse to dispense contraceptives.

Many of us also face obstacles from health insurance providers. Low-income women have to cope not only with disapproving pharmacists, but with financial restrictions as well. It is these women who are unable to receive **Affordable Contraception**. Medicaid, which serves mostly low-income individuals, is not required to cover family planning services. Moreover, not all states ensure that health insurance plans, which cover prescription drugs, provide coverage for contraceptives.

Through a combination of **Comprehensive Sexuality Education** and advocacy, initiatives at the community, state and national levels, **Plan A**, works to secure and protect access to contraceptive information and health services for all.

While many women face the lack of information and access to contraceptives, **Young Women's Access** to contraception is being greatly reduced. Moreover, all women still face obstacles in obtaining **Emergency Contraception** despite FDA approval of the drug. Although we won the right to vote and the right of choice, we are still being denied the right to control our personal health care decisions. By raising community awareness and mobilizing action, NCJW can win this fight also. And we must. Please join us in this most important effort. For more info, sign on for our Action Alerts at www.ncjwla.org.

-Michelle Reder, Intern, NCJW/LA

WHAT AMERICA THINKS ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(excerpted from NCJW Journal: Summer 2007)

86% of Americans support federal funding of state and local programs to provide contraception to low income women
66% support an increase in such funding

60% are concerned that publicly funded religious groups would proselytize recipients of social services
88% support women's access to contraception