

VOTING & ELECTIONS

FACT SHEET

Why Women Should Vote: To Make Sure Women Can Make Their Own Reproductive Health Care Decisions

June 2012

Reproductive health services are vital to women's health and wellbeing. However, women's rights to make their own decisions about contraception and abortion are under increasing attack. By voting, women can ensure government policies do not stand in the way of women making important life decisions for themselves and getting the care they need.

Millions of women have unmet reproductive health care needs.

- Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended.
- Each year, 750,000 teens in the United States become pregnant.
- One in four young women between the ages of 14 and 19 has a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Many insurance plans still do not cover the full range of FDA-approved prescription contraceptives.
- In 2006–2008, most teens aged 15–19 had received formal instruction about STIs (93 percent), HIV (89 percent) or abstinence (84 percent). However, about one-third of teens had not received any formal education on contraception.

The health care law known as the Affordable Care Act, which was passed in 2010 and is today under increasing attack, provides greater access to reproductive health services that women need.

- All new health plans must cover preventive health services such as mammograms and pap tests, at no out-of-pocket cost to the woman.
- Beginning this year, most new health plans will also have to provide additional preventive services that are important to women at no out-of-pocket cost. These include the full range of FDA-approved methods of contraception, an annual well-woman visit, screening for gestational diabetes, screening and counseling for STIs, screening for domestic violence, and breastfeeding support, supplies, and counseling.

Opponents of women's reproductive rights are waging a war on women's health care.

- Forty-eight Senators voted to allow any employer, religious or not, to refuse to provide insurance coverage for contraception or any other health service to an employee on the basis that it offends the employer's religious beliefs or moral conscience.
- A House of Representatives committee held a hearing on the health care law's requirement that insurance plans cover contraception. The panel

included five men and no women. Georgetown Law Student Sandra Fluke was not permitted to testify about the importance of insurance coverage of contraceptives for women's health care.

- In 2011, state legislatures enacted 109 restrictions on reproductive rights—almost triple the previous record. These include requirements that women undergo medically unnecessary, invasive ultrasounds; bans on abortion earlier in pregnancy than the

Constitution allows; onerous mandatory delay requirements; bans on insurance coverage of abortion; and efforts to defund Planned Parenthood and other family planning programs.

- In 2011 and 2012, 23 lawsuits were filed to challenge the Affordable Care Act's requirement that insurance cover contraceptives, alleging that it is unconstitutional.

When women vote, leaders listen.

REGISTER. VOTE.

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