

As Abortion Rights Head for Supreme Court....

FROM NATIONAL NOW

The Supreme Court announced on Feb. 21 that it will reconsider the constitutionality of a federal abortion procedure ban—a law passed by Congress identical to the Nebraska ban struck down by the Court in 2000 because it didn't protect women's health. We will soon learn whether the High Court's two newest justices are as devoted to precedent as they say they are, or whether their visceral opposition to abortion will lead them to overturn a clear precedent after only six years.

The new case, *Gonzalez v. Carhart*, concerns the same doctor, the same state, and the same issues as *Stenberg v. Carhart* in 2000, when Dr. Leroy Carhart challenged a Nebraska law that banned certain vaguely-defined abortion procedures without including any exception for a woman whose health is at risk. The Court's narrow 5-to-4 opinion in that 2000 case found the law unconstitutional. That precedent in *Stenberg* was the reason three federal courts of appeal have declared this federal ban unconstitutional as well.

The outcome in this case could be different because now-retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who cast the deciding vote in *Stenberg*, has been replaced by an opponent of abortion.

Not only will we find out whether our new justices are committed to "stare decisis" and settled law—as Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito recently assured senators they are—but we will also see whether their opposition to abortion means they will force doctors to violate their Hippocratic oath, putting the desires of Congress above their medical duty to put their patients' health first.

"This isn't the first time Congress has tried to practice medicine without a license, but if this ban is upheld, it will be the first time the Supreme Court has allowed them to do so," said NOW president Kim Gandy. "Will Congress be allowed to deprive you of the medical procedure your doctor says is safest for your particular circumstances?"

[In 2003, the Republican-controlled Congress passed a law nearly identical to the Nebraska ban, calling it the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. It was signed by President Bush that same year. In 2004, a federal court in Nebraska declared Congress's ban unconstitutional for failing to provide an exception when a woman's health is at stake. Two other federal courts followed suit. Then, in September 2005, Bush-appointed U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales petitioned the Court to review the Stenberg decision. Last month the Court granted a review. — Ed.]

Will This Case Be Far Behind?

BY MARY BAILEY

On February 24, the South Dakota legislature passed a ban on all abortions except those to save a woman's life. Under the bill, doctors who perform abortions for incest, rape, or when a woman's health is threatened could be sent to prison for up to five years. Pregnant women will not be prosecuted, perhaps because even anti-choice zealots feel some sympathy for women who cannot control their personal bodies and lives.

The bill sets up "a deliberate assault on *Roe v. Wade* at a time when some activists see the Supreme Court as more willing than ever to overturn the 33-year-old decision," noted The Washington Post, referring to the recent appointments of conservatives John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the bench.

The South Dakota Senate passed the legislation by a vote of 23 to 12 and the House by 50 to 18. If anti-choice Gov. Mike Rounds signs the bill, which he said he is inclined to do, the abortion ban will become state law on July 1. Currently, only one Sioux Falls clinic is still open in the state, and physicians from Minnesota are flown in to replace frightened South Dakota doctors.

Whether or not the case goes up to the Supreme Court depends on whether Planned Parenthood or another pro-choice group decides to challenge the law. That is "precisely what the bill's supporters have in mind," said the New York Times. They hope that such a court fight would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. "I'm convinced that the timing is right for this," said Republican bill sponsor Roger Hunt, adding that "The strong possibility of a third appointee sometime soon makes this all very real" since at 85 Justice John Paul Stevens might soon retire.

Not all abortion opponents agree with Hunt, the Times noted. Some worry that the ban is too much, too soon. Daniel McConchie, vice president of Americans United for Life, called the attempt to drive the issue to the Supreme Court a "long shot." He and others feel the anti-choice movement should continue to chip away at abortion rights at the level of the states rather than risk a challenge at this time. After all, said State Republican Senator Brock Greenfield, who is also director of the state Right to Life chapter, "Is this the right time to proceed with legislation when we will have five justices who have suggested they will vote to uphold *Roe*?" However, despite their reservations, the Republican lawmakers voted to pass the ban.

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MC NOW President's Letter

BY JEANNETTE FELDNER

Dear MC NOW Members:

Having **emergency contraception (EC)** available to women in the county and in the state is a priority for MC NOW.

EC is contraception; the FDA has determined that it is safe for women and girls; and increased access to EC will reduce abortions. Experts say that EC is effective in preventing pregnancy if it is used within 72 hours, but the sooner it is taken, the better. EC is already available without a prescription in six other states and at least 40 other countries, including countries that prohibit abortion.

In the Maryland legislature, Senator Sharon Grosfeld introduced Senate Bill 297 to make EC available from pharmacists without a prescription. The Maryland Coalition for Emergency Contraception (MCEC) has been formed to provide grassroots support for increased access to EC. Some members of the Coalition include Maryland NOW, Maryland NARAL, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, and the Montgomery County Commission for Women.

It's very urgent that SB 297 get passed during this legislative session. Please call or write to your legislators in Annapolis and tell them that Marylanders believe in a woman's right to good health, including the right to EC without a prescription. Ask friends and family in other counties in Maryland to do the same.

EC is also an issue in the emergency rooms of hospitals, where rape victims are brought for treatment. It is general policy for ERs to offer the EC to rape victims when they are doing exams. MC NOW is currently investigating to be sure that IS the case in Montgomery County hospitals, and that no one is denied EC for any reason. We will keep you informed.

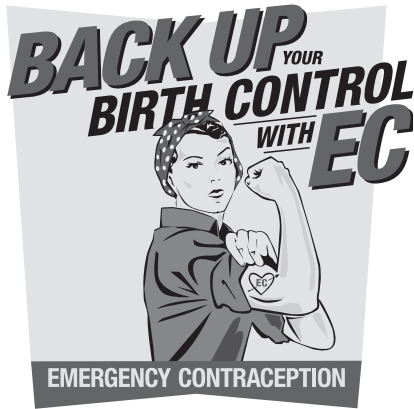
Stay active,

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Women's eNews 2/10/06

ANEWES



On Tuesday, March 21, a coalition of more than 100 women's health and medical organizations and college campuses, will hold events in dozens of states coast-to-coast to promote awareness of emergency contraception, often referred to as the 'morning-after pill.' The fifth anniversary of the annual *Back Up Your Birth Control Day of Activism* comes months after the Food and Drug indefinitely postponed a decision on whether to make Plan B – the dedicated emergency contraception product – available without a prescription. While the FDA allows political calculations to prevent women from accessing this safe and effective back-up birth control method, advocacy organizations and grassroots activists are committing one day of nationwide education and action to ensuring that the public, health care providers, pharmacists, policymakers and the media have medically-accurate information about Plan B, and that women know where to get it, and how to use it. Plan B is highly effective at reducing the risk of pregnancy, but only if used within the first few days after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure – and the sooner it's taken, the better it works.

Emergency contraception has enormous – but unfulfilled – potential to make a real impact on unintended pregnancy. In 2000, emergency contraception is believed to have prevented as many as 50,000 abortions, even though only 2 percent of women reported having ever used it. As of 2003, only 6 percent of American women said they had used backup birth control at some point in their lives.

(www.backupyourbirthcontrol.org)

Submissions to Newsletter Welcome.

From NOW On reserves the right to edit submissions for brevity. Ads accepted for nominal fees.

Call 301-236-0069

Email Mary Bailey at bravenewworld@starpower.net

Write P.O. Box 2301
Rockville, MD
20847-2301

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR APRIL ISSUE:
March 20, 2006

**Washington
Area
Clinic Defense
Task Force**

WACDTF is an all-volunteer, pro-choice group founded in 1988 to promote peaceful and safe access to women's health clinics in the DC metro area. We provide trained volunteers outside women's clinics being harassed by anti-choice extremists...often clinics providing family planning, abortions, and other health care primarily to people of color and people with low incomes.

Unfortunately, we are still needed every Saturday morning, and some weekdays as well, at clinics in Maryland, DC, and Virginia.

Volunteers currently needed, one or two Saturday mornings per month. Especially at clinics in Rockville & Silver Spring. Please write or call for more information if you are interested in helping!

Also, please join our mailing list, help on a committee, send a donation, or tell us about a clinic that might need our help. Everyone welcome!

WACDTF

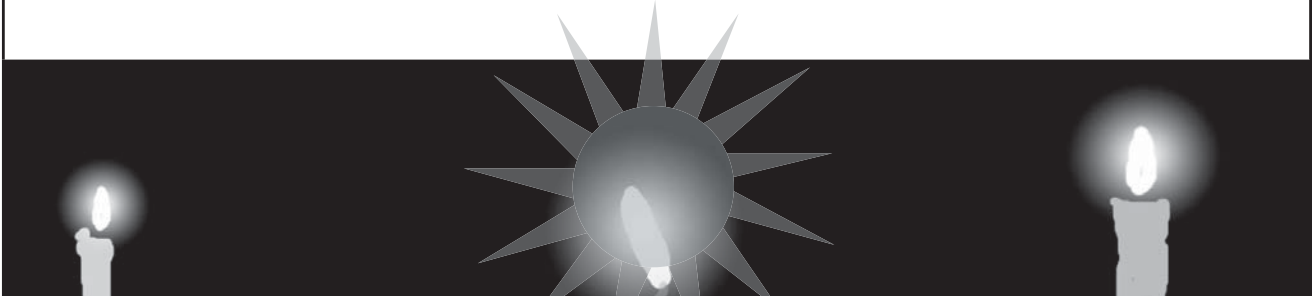
P.O. Box 21796
Washington, DC 20009
Contact: 202-797-6577 or
wacdtf@wacdtf.org
website: www.wacdtf.org

Support reproductive rights
and self-determination
for all women.

**KEEP THE CLINICS
OPEN!**

27th Annual Maryland Candlelight
MARCH FOR LIFE

Monday, March 6th, 2006, 6:30 PM in Annapolis



A new vision to the future:

Maryland Without Roe

Come learn the issues, meet your legislators and march for life as we lay out a new vision for Maryland after the fall of Roe v. Wade. Every major pro-abortion organization is expecting the end of Roe. They are shifting their troops to now focus at the state level. Come explore a vision for Maryland, post-Roe.

Keynote Address by pro-life attorney Stephen G. Peroutka, Esq.

Due to continued bridge reconstruction, last year's modified route will be used again this year.

- Meet at the parking lot of St. Mary's Church (109 Duke of Gloucester Street).
- March through the streets of downtown Annapolis to the Statehouse.
- Bring Family, Friends, Church and Student/Youth Groups.
- Bring candles (in containers), signs & banners (without sticks).
- Bring a PHOTO ID for entrance into Legislative Buildings.
- Shuttle bus service will be available for those with special needs.

Directions: US Rt 50 to Annapolis, exit at Rowe Blvd. into town. After crossing the bridge at College Creek bear right at the fork. At the light, bear left onto Northwest Street and proceed to Church Circle. Go around the circle to 4th right onto Duke of Gloucester Street. St. Mary's is two blocks down on the right. Watch for orange-vested marshals to direct traffic.

Get directions, flyers, and legislative updates at
www.marylandmarchforlife.org / 410-897-0700

Can't attend? Send a donation instead payable to:
Maryland March for Life, P.O. Box 2342, Annapolis, MD 21404-2342



Elsewhere in the World

ABRIDGED FROM WWW.WOMENSENEWS.ORG

January 31, 2006

Cacho Faces Defamation Charges in Mexico

Mexican journalist and domestic violence activist Lydia Cacho faces defamation charges for implicating Mexican businessmen in child pornography rings. Cacho's book, "The Demons of Eden: the Power Behind Pornography," names two men, Jean Succar and Jose Nacif. Succar is jailed in Arizona awaiting extradition to Mexico on child pornography and prostitution charges. Nacif, Succar's friend, responded to the book with defamation charges that led to Cacho's arrest in December. The police took her on a 21-hour ride to Puebla, where Nacif lives and where the arrest warrant was made. Cacho's book includes the transcript of a video in which Succar states that he has sex with girls as young as five. She also printed what a victim told federal police: that Succar seduced her when she was 13 and had her round up girls even younger. A judge will review Cacho's case and if he finds her guilty, Cacho faces six months to a year in prison.

February 5, 2006

Female Coffee Growers Find New Freedoms in Peru

In Peru, female coffee growers have partnered with a U.S. import company to market their own brand of organic, fair-trade coffee. In addition to gaining more economic control, the women are finding their work is changing their culture as well. The women's own coffee brand is called Café Femenino and is imported to the U.S. by the Organic Product Trading Co. Now, 60 roasters in the U.S., Canada and Australia agree to pay an extra two cents a pound to contribute to the women and the Café Femenino Foundation, which focuses on women's economic development. Since their coffee is certified by the Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International and therefore earns a higher price, the women make about 30 percent more than the average coffee farmer. This benefits the whole family, which persuades husbands to cede land to their wives. In order to join the co-op, a woman must have her own name on the deed of the land she works.

February 10, 2006:

Trade Critics Show Little Love for Valentines

U.S. women spend an average of \$68 for Valentine's Day gifts, but behind this figure are foreign women who toil long hours for meager wages. Gifts such as scented candles and heart-shaped boxes are frequently made in China, the rising economic powerhouse. The vast majority of China's factory workers are young women from rural areas who aren't citizens of the province in which they work. Competitive pressures are building on a predominantly female global low-wage work force that ranges from Africa to Mexico. "Now everyone is competing against poor women in China," says Robert Bruno, of the University of Illinois. Meanwhile, people buying such goods are often women who shop at discount stores because they need to stretch ever-tightening budgets. "It's almost as if the world's female lower and working classes are eating one another," Bruno notes. He says shoppers concerned about overseas labor conditions should lobby for an international living wage and the imposition of sanctions on countries that disobey labor standards.

February 18, 2006

Tape Reveals Mexican Plot

In response to the growing controversy about the arrest of feminist investigative reporter Lydia Cacho, the Mexican government announced the creation of a special prosecutor's office to investigate crimes against journalists. On Feb. 14, a tape incriminating Puebla state governor Mario Marin and a well-known businessman in Mexico was anonymously given to the Mexico City press. The tape reportedly records Marin telling the businessman that Cacho will receive "no impunity" from the law. On tape, Marin and the businessman also discuss how to have Cacho raped in jail. Marin has refused to resign over the scandal.

How it Was

MARCH (1900 – 1949)

- 1 Throwing bags of stones and hammers, 200 British women break most of the windows in the stores at Piccadilly Circus and on Regent Street in London to dramatize the suffrage cause, 1912.
- 4 Frances Perkins becomes the first woman in the U.S. Cabinet as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, 1933.
- 4 District of Columbia Court of Appeals invalidates all the prison sentences and original arrests of suffrage demonstrators in the U.S. Capital, 1918.
- 10 Constance Markievicz is released from prison shortly after becoming the Irish Secretary of State, the first female cabinet member in Western Europe, 1919.
- 10 Italian women vote in local elections for the first time, 1946.
- 11 Juliet Gordon Low organizes the first troop of Girl Scouts—later to be the Girl Scouts of America—in Savannah, Ga., 1912.
- 13 Susan B. Anthony dies, fourteen years before women win the vote, 1906.

The Watchful Eye

BY MARY BAILEY



Reducing unintended pregnancies.

Maryland ranks 12th among states in the overall availability and funding of contraceptives and reproductive health services, according to a Guttmacher Institute study of progress states have made between 1994 and 2001.

However, while Maryland is 5th in laws and policies facilitating services and information, it is 14th in public money supporting services and supplies, and a shameful 28th among states in meeting the need for subsidized contraception

and reproductive health care. The study reveals the bind placed on the estimated 17 million teenage and poor women, since lack of money and education make birth control and abstinence difficult. Yet, while policymakers proclaim reducing unintended pregnancies a national goal, 33 states make it more difficult for teenage and low-income women to get contraceptives and related services. (Wash Post, 3-1-06)

Voice against abuse. Yvette Cade has received hundreds of letters from abused women since she was set on fire by her husband last October at the convenience store where she worked. This is the woman whose request for a protective order Judge Palumbo of Prince George's County had dismissed. Now home from the hospital, Cade still suffers from open wounds to her face, arms, chest and back. She has to be bathed twice a day to remove her charred skin. This is "an especially grueling process since her fragile body has to be turned several times to accomplish this painful task," reports the family's site www.yvettedefund.org. She is eager to respond to the letter writers about "sexual, mental and physical abuse and their plight," the site states. Cade vows, "Once my bandages are off, I will be their voice." (Wash Post 2-19-06)

Answers to the test. Last month this column asked you to find errors in Judge Richard Posner's decision to un-ban sales of videos such as "Grand Auto Theft: San Andreas" to children. He wrote that these games deserve as much protection as the violent parts of "The Odyssey" and "The Divine Comedy." He also said, "To shield children right up until the age of 18 from exposure to violent descriptions and

images would not only be quixotic, but deforming; it would leave them unequipped to deal with the world as we know it." OK, some rebuttals: First, few children read "The Odyssey" and "The Divine Comedy"—you can't say the same for video games. Second, those two works of literature see violence through the eyes of a narrator, while "Grand Theft Auto" requires viewers to experience the violence and direct it first hand. Third, it is documented that the military wants children to learn aggressive video skills and that it advises certain video makers on what skills to emphasize. Fourth, scientists are tracing the effect on the brain of what one *does*. If someone—especially a teenager experiencing a brain spurt—repeatedly goes through the motions of violence, or even imagines going through such motions, the area of the brain devoted to the activity enlarges and takes over adjacent areas. Fifth, practicing the skills and emotions of aggression can indeed contribute to the world as we know it, including the domestic and sexual world women and girls have to live in.

Brain activity caused by playing violent video games is similar to the pattern typical in real world aggression, according to a study conducted at several U.S. and German universities. Said researcher Rene Weber of Michigan State University, "Violent video games frequently have been criticized for enhancing aggressive reactions such as aggressive cognitions [thoughts], aggressive affects [emotions] or aggressive behavior. On a neurobiological level we have shown the link exists." (National Institute on Media and the Family, 2/06)

Do we need a cartoon scandal to tell us this? "We have a very overdeveloped sense of rights and a very underdeveloped sense of responsibilities," says Sam Chaltain, coordinator of the First Amendment Schools project. The project addresses the need for civic responsibility, starting with the very young. For instance, the Nursery Road Elementary School, Columbia, S.C., developed this Kindergarten Class Constitution: "We promise to help each other play and learn. If someone falls we help them up. We will care about each other and share. We will not tattle tell or fight. We will be friends even when no one is watching and not laugh at each other's mistakes. We will say 'good try' and we will not break our promise." (Wash Post 2-21-06)

How it Was MARCH (1900 – 1949)

- 17 Full political rights for Polish women are written into the Constitution, 1921.
- 20 Readers of the first issue of "The Woman Rebel," 1914, learn of editor-publisher Margaret Sanger's philosophy: "Look the world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; have an idea, and speak and act in defiance of convention."
- 21 In its first act as a new territory, Alaska passes a bill granting women the vote, 1913.

- 25 Locked in a building that had no outside fire escape, 146 women workers tragically burn or jump to death at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City, 1911.
- 28 Constance Markievicz tells a Dublin audience, "A free Ireland with no sex disabilities in her constitution should be the motto of all Nationalist women," 1909.

(Selections from *The Liberated Woman's Appointment Calendars, 1972-74*)

MC NOW Calendar of Events

Board Meetings will take place on the first or second Monday of each month. All members welcome.
Chapter meetings and action activities are held regularly.

MARCH: WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

- 6 (Mon) 6:30 pm. March for Life: "Maryland Without Roe," Annapolis. See page 4.
- 7 (Tue) 11 am. Joan Shenandoah talks about Iroquois women and current events. Humanities Bldg, Room 210, Montgomery College, Rockville.
- 8 (Wed) International Women's Day.
- 8 (Wed) 10 am. Sexual Assault Lobby Day, Neall Conference Room, James Senate Office Bldg, 2nd floor. MD Coalition Against Sexual Assault. 301-565-2277 or policy@mcasa.org.
- 9 (Thu) 6-8 pm. "Women and the War on Drugs." Sponsored by Justice MD, Nat'l Women's Prison Project and Coppin State Univ, Tawes Center Ballroom, 2500 W. North Ave., Annapolis. 410-244-6334 or 410-233-3385.
- 9 (Thu) 7:30 pm. "Stop the Next War Now." Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK, speaks at Pascal Center, Anne Arundel Community College. 410-777-2807.
- 9 (Thu) 7:30 pm. "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price" film. Friends Stony Run Meeting House, 5116 N. Charles St, Baltimore. www.baltimorenow.org or 410-668-4399.
- 10 (Fri) 7th Annual Women in Business Conference and Tradeshow. MC Conference Center, Rockville Pike/ White Flint Metro. \$95. 301-424-9300 or www.women-in-business.org.
- 14 (Tue) 7 pm. MC NOW CHAPTER AND BOARD MEETING. Hollywood East restaurant, University Blvd between Georgia Ave. and Viers Mill Road, Wheaton. 301-942-0938 or Lj.feldner@verizon.net.
- 16 (Thu) 2-4 pm. MD Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform meeting re funding services for immigrant women and children. MC Commission for Women, 401 N. Washington St, Suite 100, Rockville. RSVP to AsKasper@aol.com. Q's to 301-229-2767.
- 17 (Fri) 5:30-8 pm. Prospective Member Open House at Women's National Democratic Club, 1526 New Hampshire Ave., NW, DC. Dupont Circle Metro, Q St. exit.
- 21 (Tue) 6:30 pm. "Back to the Future." MC Business & Professional Women. Starring actress Kate Campbell Stevenson as five historical role models. Adults \$20, students free. Doubletree Hotel, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville. RSVP by March 15, 301-346-3850 or Lcannon123@yahoo.com.



Give a gift of membership to your Friends, Family, and Yourself.



MC NOW New and Renewal Membership Form

<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	ONE YEAR, FULL NOW MEMBERSHIP (e-newsletter subscription <i>free</i>)	Name _____
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<input type="checkbox"/> \$17-34	Sliding scale; what you can afford	City _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FREE	I am a Maryland or National NOW member and wish to affiliate with Montgomery County NOW (chapter 0200)	State _____
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