

# Talking About Abortion Coverage: Message and Action Toolkit

May 2013

---

## **Take Action** to increase support for coverage of abortion care

The following toolkit provides resources to help put into practice messages that will increase support for health coverage of abortion for low income women. Based on recent qualitative and quantitative research, you'll find messages that can increase support without inadvertently reinforcing our opponents' message that current bans are reasonable.

It includes:

- A message box
- Suggestions on responding to tough questions and misconceptions
- Sample letters to the editor
- An example Op-Ed
- Sample action alerts
- Ways to take action to #EndCoverageBans by using social media
- Other resources to add to your efforts

Please also refer to our companion online message booklet, *A Path To Justice*, which has more detailed message recommendations, located at <http://bit.ly/msgbk>.

### CONTACT

Lydia Stuckey, ConwayStrategic,  
lydia@conwaystrategic.com, 202-642-3787

**\*\*CONFIDENTIAL\*\***

## Message Box

These message recommendations are based on the most recent qualitative and quantitative research from several CAARE member organizations.

### Basic Values

Certain values serve as touchstones to remind our audiences of why they support keeping abortion legal, available and affordable:

- Freedom from political interference
- Personal decision-making
- Improving women's health
- Fair treatment

### Fair Treatment, Not Interference in Personal Decisions

The amount of money a woman has or doesn't have should not prohibit her from having an abortion.

However we feel about abortion, politicians shouldn't be allowed to deny a woman's health coverage just because she's poor.

We should not allow politicians to deny health coverage from someone in need and qualified for Medicaid just to make it impossible for her to have an abortion.

Some politicians in Washington want to ban all abortions in the United States. Instead, they're denying Medicaid coverage in order to make abortion unaffordable. But politicians should not interfere with a woman's ability to make her own important health care decisions.

### Common sense policy benefits us all

It makes sense to me that health programs for women with low incomes cover birth control and abortion --not just childbirth--because when people can plan if and when to have children, it's good for them and for society as a whole.

Whether she has private or government-funded health insurance, every woman should have coverage for a full range of pregnancy-related care, including abortion.

### Respect that people need to make their own life decisions

When it comes to the most important decisions in life, like whether to become a parent, it is vital that a woman is able to consider all the options available to her, regardless of how little money she makes.

It's not my place to decide for someone else whether or not she should get an abortion. It's better that she makes that personal decision with her family and her faith. And I especially don't want politicians to make that decision for her simply because she doesn't have enough money to pay for the abortion herself.

We don't always know a woman's circumstances — we're not in her shoes.

A woman struggling to make ends meet needs to be able to make important, personal decisions based on what is best for her circumstances.

## Responding to Tough Questions and Misconceptions

---

**“Because some people oppose abortion, taxpayer funds should not be used to fund them” or “I am personally opposed to abortion and don’t want my tax dollars paying for it.”**

- It’s not our place to make important life decisions for someone else. When Medicaid covers the costs of all pregnancy care, including abortion, it means a woman can make the decision based on what is best for her circumstances.
- When it comes to the most important decisions in life, such as whether to become a parent, it is vital that a woman is able to consider all the options available to her, regardless of how little money she has. It’s not our place to interfere with her decision by withholding coverage.
- However we feel about abortion, politicians shouldn’t be allowed to deny a woman’s health coverage just because she is poor.

**“I don’t want to pay for abortion with my tax dollars.” Or “I think abortion should be legal, but don’t ask me to pay for it.”**

- Many of us have strong feelings about abortion. However strongly I feel, how could I possibly make that decision for someone else? We shouldn’t take away a woman’s options by denying her health coverage and limiting her ability to make the best decision for herself and her family.
- It’s not our place to treat one woman’s health needs differently than others just because of the type of insurance coverage she has.

**“A woman can pay for an abortion out-of-pocket.”**

- We don’t always know a woman’s circumstances — we’re not in her shoes.
- A woman struggling to make ends meet should not have to make the decision about whether or not to end her pregnancy based on how she gets her health coverage or how much money she has—her decision should be based on what is best for her and her family’s circumstances.
  - Studies show that when policymakers place funding restrictions on Medicaid, about one in four women is unable to obtain an abortion.
- When a woman needs to end her pregnancy, it is important that she has access to safe medical care. Providing health coverage ensures she will be able to see a licensed, quality health provider.

**“Contraception is easy to get - it’s a woman’s fault if she gets pregnant.”**

- We don’t always know a woman’s circumstances — we’re not in her shoes. There are many reasons why a woman might become pregnant when she doesn’t plan to. Whether it is because her birth control failed, was unaffordable, she was abused, or another reason, it is important for a woman to be able to make the decision that’s best for her and her situation.

**“Why should I have to foot the bill for someone else’s irresponsible behavior?” or “Too many women use abortion as birth control.”**

- Once a woman is pregnant she needs support to make the best decision for her situation. While we may disagree with her reasons, I believe it is better when a woman is able to decide what is best for her based on her circumstances.

**“I am pro-choice, but repealing Hyde just isn’t viable right now.”**

- We’re grateful for your continued support of personal decision-making. But if a woman cannot afford to end a pregnancy and politicians are denying her insurance coverage, they are interfering with her ability to make a real decision.
- We should not allow politicians to deny health coverage from someone in need and qualified for Medicaid just to make it impossible for her to have an abortion.

**“Hyde is the law of the land.” or “There is no taxpayer funding of abortion.”**

- It’s true that Congress currently denies Medicaid health insurance from covering most abortions. But we should not allow politicians to interfere with a woman’s ability to make her own important health care decisions.
- While our federal law currently withholds funding for abortion, in 15 states a woman is able to get health assistance funds to end a pregnancy.

**“Medicaid dollars have never been used on abortion, why should we change that now when there are other, more pressing issues to worry about, like the economy?”**

- The Medicaid denials of coverage for abortion, often referred to as the “Hyde amendment,” have been around for a number of years, but that does not mean they are good policy.
- It makes sense that health programs for women with low incomes cover birth control and abortion --not just childbirth--because when people can plan if and when to have children, it’s good for them and for society as a whole.

**“Codifying Hyde or the other abortion coverage riders wouldn’t change anything in the real world, so I don’t know why I should spend political capital defending them.”**

- Some politicians in Washington want to ban all abortions. But they can’t, so instead they are denying Medicaid coverage just to make abortion unaffordable and out of reach.
- In addition to politicians interfering with women’s personal decision, the real life impact is clear:
  - Nearly 1 in 7 women of reproductive age (15-44) is insured through the Medicaid program. Restricting Medicaid coverage of abortion forces one in four poor women to carry an unintended pregnancy to term.
  - Women who want to get abortions but are denied are three times more likely to fall into poverty than those who can get an abortion.

**“This funding will cause more abortions.”**

- We may disagree about abortion, but it is better when a woman can make the decision that’s best for her. It makes sense that health programs for women with low incomes cover birth control and abortion --not just childbirth--because when people can plan if and when to have children, it’s good for them and for society as a whole.

# Sample Letters to the Editor

---

## Political

Words: 139

Dear Editor,

Sadly, the recent [legislation or comment on abortion coverage] is a reminder of a larger agenda. Some politicians don't want abortion to be legal in America, but since they can't have their way, they are trying to pass bills that make abortion unaffordable. But politicians should not interfere with a woman's ability to make her own health care decisions.

However we feel about abortion, it's not our place to make that personal decision for someone else. And it's certainly not the place of our elected officials. It's better that a woman makes that decision with her family and her faith. Holding back coverage from someone who is qualified and enrolled in Medicaid, just to make it impossible for her to have an abortion, is unconscionable. We can't let abortion care be excluded from health coverage just for political reasons.

## Health and Safety

Words: 190

Dear Editor,

I am [concerned/excited] about [pertinent article or current affair]. When a woman decides to end her pregnancy, it is important that she has access to safe medical care. The best way to do this is by providing insurance coverage – whether public or private – so she will be able to see a licensed, quality health provider and make the best decisions for herself and her family.

Everyone faces different circumstances in life. It is imperative that we safeguard women's health and well-being no matter what the situation by ensuring that every woman has insurance coverage for maternity care and abortion care if she needs it without potentially harmful delay or interference. When it comes to the most important decisions in life, such as whether to become a parent, it is vital that a woman is able to consider all the options available to her, regardless of how she receives her health coverage.

It makes sense that health programs for women with low incomes cover birth control and abortion – not just childbirth – because when people can plan if and when to have children, it's good for them and for society as a whole.

## Decision making

Words: 181

Dear Editor,

Abortion funding for low-income women remains one of the main barriers to reproductive health equity in this country. That why's [pertinent article or current affair] is so [concerning/exciting].

When it comes to a critical personal decision like abortion, it's better when a low-income woman – just like anyone else – can afford to consider all her options, instead of losing some of those options just because she's poor. Decisions about whether to choose adoption, end a pregnancy, or raise a child are better left those with intimate knowledge of the situation: a woman and her family in consultation with her health care provider.

We simply don't always know a woman's circumstances—we're not walking in her shoes. When it comes to the most important decisions in life, such as whether to become a parent, it is vital that a woman is able to consider all the options available to her, regardless of how little money she makes. It's time for politicians to stop interfering with a woman's ability to make her own important health care decisions by imposing restrictions on abortion coverage.

## Faith Perspective

Words: 147

Dear Editor,

The article [title/date] really struck me.

There are no easy answers to life's complex questions, and sometimes that means abortion is the best decision a woman can make for her unique circumstances. That's why I fully support public and private insurance coverage for abortion. To stand in the way of a woman making life-altering decisions merely because of how much money she makes goes against everything I believe. I believe in every woman's moral agency - her God-given ability to make decisions for herself – and no woman should be forced to make a decision about pregnancy because she is struggling to make ends meet.

I pray we can all begin to trust women to make the best decisions for their own lives, whether we agree with those decisions or not. Changing the law to allow Medicaid health insurance to cover abortion is the best answer I can see.

### TIP

**Make sure to read the submission instructions carefully when sending in LTEs. You'll always need to include detailed contact information, including the city and state where you reside.**

## Op-Ed Example

---

This Op-Ed from the *Charleston Gazette* by CAARE State Lab partner WVFREE is a perfect example of how to incorporate the recommended messaging into public communications.



April 23, 2013

**Margaret Chapman Pomponio and Kira Miskimmin: Health coverage matters.**

<http://tinyurl.com/cwj002>

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Whether you are single and just out of college, a mom or a senior citizen ... whatever your circumstances, you can probably appreciate how important it is to have health insurance. It helps us get timely care that can protect our health and our lives. It enables us to live with peace of mind, knowing that an unexpected health issue won't drive us into serious financial crisis.

Coverage matters when it comes to reproductive health care, such as maternity care or abortion.

This is why our organizations, WV FREE and Planned Parenthood, along with many people and over 20 organizations from across West Virginia, urged our elected officials to pass a new maternity coverage law that ensures every woman who has insurance will have coverage for the health care she may need. We are so thrilled that the Legislature passed this important legislation.

Senate Bill 22 received unanimous support in the Senate and only lost two votes in the House. And now it is headed to the Governor's desk to be signed! This legislation is a win-win for West Virginia. It will save our state money and improve the health of expectant mothers and their babies by helping pregnant women receive critical prenatal care.

Sadly, though, some of our politicians were more interested in using our new state health care exchange and our Medicaid program to restrict abortion coverage and create additional barriers a woman would face when making a personal decision about her health. But we made the case that it's not our place to make decisions about pregnancy for someone else -- and it's certainly not the place of politicians. Only a woman can make personal and often complex decisions about her pregnancy, with the help of her family, her faith and her health-care provider.

Fortunately, our legislature listened.

As organizations that work every day to promote women's health, we are reminded that whether a woman gets her insurance through her job or through state health programs, she should have coverage for a full range of pregnancy-related care, from prenatal care to abortion, so she can make the best decision for her circumstances.

During discussion on this bill and on anti-women's health amendments to the state budget, it was so heartening to hear that our elected officials understand that this kind of last-minute wrangling is unacceptable. A woman's health should never be used as a political football.

When it comes to the most important decisions in life, such as whether to raise a child, end a pregnancy or chose adoption, it is vital that a woman is able to consider all the options available to her, regardless of how much money she has or where she gets her health care coverage.

So, on behalf of our thousands of members, patients and supporters in West Virginia, we say thank you to our elected officials for supporting legislation that promotes women's health rather than takes health care coverage away. Thank you for ensuring that women will not have to base important decisions about their health on where they get their insurance. This will give many families the assurance that if something happens with their health, they will be covered.

This session, the Legislature showed that it can reject the powers of extremism by standing up to a narrow special interest lobby bent on taking West Virginia backward. Instead, the Legislature took a proactive step to move our state forward. And for this, we applaud you!

*Pomponio is executive director of WV FREE, and Miskimmin is West Virginia director of public affairs for Planned Parenthood Health Systems.*



**Did you get media attention or publish a piece on  
abortion coverage?  
Let us know so we can share it! Email the piece to  
[paula@conwaystrategic.com](mailto:paula@conwaystrategic.com).**



## Sample Action Alerts

---

### Short version

[Context/set up info]. [Target] has a decision to make: s/he can withhold abortion coverage from women who get their insurance or health care through the Federal government, or s/he can send a message that it is time to lift the restrictions on coverage of abortion care.

**Act now and tell [target] to [policy action] that lifts the restrictions on coverage of abortion care.**

Reproductive health decisions are better made by a woman in consultation with her family, her physician, and her faith. For a woman to be able to make a real decision based on what's best for her circumstances, she needs to be able to afford it. Ask [target] to help us keep politicians out of our families' personal medical decisions.

**Tell [target] to help us keep politicians from interfering in our families' personal medical decisions – [policy action] that lifts restrictions on coverage of abortion care.**

### Longer Version – Federal Appropriations Specific

[Context/set up info]. [Target] has a decision to make: s/he can withhold abortion coverage from women who get their insurance or health care through the Federal government, or s/he can support personal decision making and lift the restrictions on coverage of abortion care.

**Act now and tell [target] to [policy action] that lifts the restrictions on coverage of abortion care.**

#### **Background:**

Every year, politicians use our nation's budget process to deny health coverage for the cost of abortion care for women who are Federal employees, women serving in our Armed Services and spouses of those in the military, women in the Peace Corps, women in federal prisons, women who receive health care through Indian Health Services, or are qualified and enrolled in Medicaid insurance federally and in the District of Columbia.

Some politicians in Washington don't want abortion to be legal at all, so they promote bans that withhold abortion coverage and make it unaffordable. Politicians shouldn't interfere with a woman's ability to make her own health care decisions.

Reproductive health decisions are better made by a woman in consultation with her family, her doctor, and her faith. For a woman to be able to make a real decision based on what's best for her circumstances, she needs to be able to afford it. And when a woman needs to end her pregnancy, it is important that she has access to safe medical care. Insurance coverage ensures she can get the care she needs from a licensed, quality health provider.

**Tell [target] to help us keep politicians out of our families' personal medical decisions – [policy action] that lifts restrictions on coverage of abortion care.**

# Social Media Ideas

---

## Twitter

Suggested hashtags:

**#endcoveragebans**  
**#repealhyde**  
**#hydehurts**

- A woman struggling to make ends meet & thinking about abortion needs support, not more barriers #EndCoverageBans
- The amount of money a woman has shouldn't prohibit her from having an abortion #EndCoverageBans
- Low-income women face difficult barriers to accessing quality health care. Let's remove one hurdle and #repealhyde #Cleanbudget
- However strongly we feel about a woman's decision about abortion, it's always hers to make w family & faith #EndCoverageBans
- No woman should have her decision about abortion made for her because she can't afford medical care #EndCoverageBans
- BarackObama: Funding for abortion care is not just a health issue, also an economic issue for women #EndCoverageBans
- Protect women's health by ensuring that every woman has affordable coverage for maternity care & abortion care #EndCoverageBans
- Women who are employees of the Federal government should be able to use health insurance coverage for abortion care #EndCoverageBans
- Women in DC should be able to use DC Medicaid to cover the cost of abortion care #EndCoverageBans

## Facebook

- Check out this evocative article "[Need An Abortion In Texas? Don't Be Poor.](#)" We are committed to making sure that when a woman needs to end a pregnancy, she has access to affordable, safe medical care. Let us know what you think about this article in the comments.
- Have you read this new study about how women pay for abortion care yet? <http://tinyurl.com/d68r35y> Makes us want to work that much harder to lift restrictions on health coverage for abortion.
- You have to watch this video of Karen Law from Pro-Choice Resources talking about why health coverage for abortion is so important: <http://tinyurl.com/d33wfvu>

## Social Media Tools to Check Out

- Thunderclap.it
- Storify.com
- RebelMouse.com

### TIP

The best way to make your content **pop** on Facebook is to add video, pictures or links.

## Resources

---

### Fact Sheets and Research

**At what cost?: Payment for abortion care by U.S. Women**, Guttmacher Institute, et al  
<http://tinyurl.com/d68r35y>

**How the Hyde Amendment Discriminates Against Poor Women and Women of Color**,  
Center for American Progress  
<http://tinyurl.com/clxbqwp>

**The Impact of the Hyde Amendment**, National Network of Abortion Funds  
<http://tinyurl.com/boha7su>

**Documenting the Impact of the Hyde Amendment on Women's Abortion Access**,  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
<http://tinyurl.com/c6ttlbj>

**Hyde Amendment Fact Sheet**, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
<http://tinyurl.com/c28sml2>

**Public Funding For Abortion: Medicaid and the Hyde Amendment**, National Abortion  
Federation  
<http://tinyurl.com/8y33duc>

**Quick Sheet: Insurance Coverage of Abortion Care**, National Institute for Reproductive Health  
<http://tinyurl.com/bu73wtv>

**Medicaid's Role for Women across the Lifespan: Current Issues and the Impact of the  
Affordable Care Act**, Kaiser Family Foundation  
<http://tinyurl.com/ccwrrqn>

**Why the Affordable Care Act Matters for Women: Restrictions on Abortion Coverage**,  
National Partnership for Women and Families  
<http://tinyurl.com/cz74fv8>

**State Bans on Insurance Coverage of Abortion Endanger Women's Health and Take  
Health Benefits Away From Women**, National Women's Law Center  
<http://tinyurl.com/cdauxs2>

**State Policies in Brief: Restricting Insurance Coverage of Abortion**, Guttmacher Institute  
<http://tinyurl.com/yejbfow>

### Infographics

**How do women pay for abortions?** Guttmacher Institute  
<http://tinyurl.com/cxyduof>

**Abortion in the U.S. has become concentrated among poor women**, Guttmacher Institute  
<http://tinyurl.com/cxyduof>

**36 Years of the Hyde Amendment**, Ms. Foundation

<http://tinyurl.com/bt3tash>

## Videos

**Jersey Garcia, Mi Lola: Lift Restrictions on Coverage of Abortion Care** (A project of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project)

<http://tinyurl.com/ckv3yk8>

**Tanisha Humphrey, Advocates for Youth: Lift the bans on abortion coverage** (A project of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project)

<http://tinyurl.com/cdh5mus>

**Shivana Jorawar, NAPAWF: Lift the bans on abortion coverage for women using Medicaid benefits** (A project of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project)

<http://tinyurl.com/cbxghmh>

**Karen Law, Pro-Choice Resources: Lift the bans on abortion coverage for women using Medicaid** (A project of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project)

<http://tinyurl.com/d33wfvu>

## Stories

**How are women's lives affected?** National Network of Abortion Funds

<http://tinyurl.com/4bsygrh>

**Whose Choice: How the Hyde Amendment Harms Poor Women,** Center for Reproductive Rights

<http://tinyurl.com/7xmukwn>

**The One in Three Campaign,** Advocates for Youth

<http://www.1in3campaign.org/>