



Ohio Religious Coalition  
for  
Reproductive Choice

# UPDATE

Volume 6 Number 3

Fall 2006

## What Can a Religious Pro-Choice Person Do About '06 Elections?

As an individual, you can register people to vote, work for and support candidates. As an I.R.C. Sec. 501(c)(3) corporation, Ohio RCRC can encourage you to do these things. However, we cannot endorse candidates, work for them or give them donations. What we *can* do is provide some questions which you, as a religious pro-choice person, can ask candidates that will reveal their positions on reproductive choice. The list of questions is provided on a separate page, page 3, so you can take it with you to fundraisers, forums, and candidates' nights.

A "yes" answer to a question shows a commitment to pro-choice values.

It sometimes takes courage to ask these questions, but they can give pro-choice candidates an opportunity to show the depth of their concern about our issues, and anti-choice candidates a chance to reveal their positions. For example, at a recent fundraiser for a candidate for Congress, one of our members asked question #5 about the UN family planning funds, and #7, about military women's lack of access to abortion. These questions gave the candidate an opening to take a position on AIDS prevention in Africa and supporting the troops overseas with full health care services.

Our member then asked her questions #1 and #2; whether she supported "Prevention First" legislation and accurate sexuality education. In response, the candidate talked about her concerns as an elected official about teen pregnancy, the need for accurate sex education, and the actions she took to separate church and state when she learned that a religious agency was teaching sex education. The agency was from her own religion!

And finally, when asked the last question for all candidates about whether restrictions on contraception and abortion interfere with religious liberty, she expounded on her belief that government should not interfere with people's exercise of their religion and religious values. (You may need to explain this question as our member did, with the sentences in parentheses.)

The candidate was applauded after every answer! After the candidate left,

the Ohio RCRC member was warmly thanked by three women for asking the questions! This was enough of a reward for the anxiety and pounding heart she felt while asking them.

Be sure to ask the last question about religious liberty of all candidates. It is the most telling one for religious pro-choice voters!

***ACTION:*** Go to page three to read all of the questions and take the page with you so you have it when you meet a candidate. Use it to ask questions appropriate for your candidate. Click on "Elections" at [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) if you need to print out more copies for your friends to use.

### "Action" Items

In this issue, we are flagging all of the opportunities to take action with the bolded and italicized word ***ACTION***, followed by suggestions for action.

### Support Ohio RCRC and Update!

We need your support! Please send a check with your generous donation in the enclosed envelope to support this newsletter and all the programs and activities described in it. Thank you!

### Call to Justice! Help Us Lobby More Effectively!

Send us your email address and those of your pro-choice friends on the enclosed card. We will add your name to our Email Advocacy Network (EAN) and ask your friends if we can add theirs. Members of EAN receive information, sample lobby letters, and a chance to make a difference!

#### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

*The Ohio Religious Coalition is an affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice comprised of over 40 religious denominations and faith groups. The Ohio Coalition Board is made up of individuals representing Ohio organizations and interests.*

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#### EDUCATION MISSION

*The Ohio Religious Coalition works toward an educated society in which people make reproductive choices freely and according to conscience and faith.*

Send comments to:

**P.O. Box 82204**  
**Columbus, OH 43202**  
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**www.ohiorc.org**

# Hearing on Ohio H.B. 228, the Total Ban on Abortion

**H.B. 228:** On June 13, the Ohio House Health Committee held a hearing on H.B. 228, which would ban abortion by making it a second degree felony to perform an abortion in the State of Ohio, with no exceptions for the health or life of a woman, or for rape or incest. It would also be a second degree felony to transport a woman across state or county lines, or to "cause her to be transported." The effect of the bill will be to make a felon of not only practitioners of abortion, but also of a woman who self-aborts. Not only the person who drives a woman to an abortion in another state, the person who provides her with funds to go there would be a felon. A second degree felony is punishable by 2 to 8 years in jail.

## Testimony by pro-choice

**clergy:** Ten proponents of the bill were permitted to testify and nine opponents. Two religious pro-choice clergy, Rabbi Barnett Brickner (Reform Judaism) and Rev. Lois Powell (United Church of Christ), invited by Ohio RCRC, testified on the panel moderated by Planned Parenthood. Both of them opposed the bill on the ground that it would interfere with the religious liberty of Ohioans and of clergy members, by prohibiting them from exercising their religious beliefs and values related to abortion.

## Rabbi Brickner's testimony:

Rabbi Brickner unequivocally stated that in Judaism, according to the Torah, life begins at birth, not at conception, and, the interpretation in the Talmud is that abortion is not murder because the fetus is not a living soul. In addition, a supreme value is placed on the health of a woman. A total ban on abortion would result in widespread danger to the physical and mental health of many women. Rabbi Brickner concluded: "Whether or not to have an abortion is a religious and moral issue." He asked the Committee to consider that "Should this bill pass, my fellow clergy and I will see an increase in pastoral counseling to women who are emotionally and religiously stressed over the dilemma of having an unwanted baby or breaking the law. And I, given my religious per-

spective, would be faced with a dilemma of my own. For I would be compelled, by my understanding of Jewish law, to become an accomplice in her act of civil disobedience, putting myself at risk of breaking the law."

## Rev. Powell's testimony:



Speaking both as a UCC minister and as the Chair of the Board of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Rev. Powell noted that the United Church of Christ

has supported women's access to safe and legal abortion since 1969 and that "one of the reasons we have done so is because we take seriously the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution. In our pluralistic nation and state, religious groups have thought through this issue carefully and have done so in the context of upholding the sacredness of life." She pointed out: "No consensus exists on the issue of the morality of abortion or on when human personhood begins. House Bill 228 would interfere with the religious liberties of faith groups who understand that the decision to terminate a pregnancy can be a sound moral decision, one which is consistent with one's faith and values." As the Chair of RCRC's Board, she represents "the majority of Americans who believe that decisions on when and how many children to bring in to the world must be a decision a woman makes in conjunction with her faith, moral values and her God."

Both Rabbi Brickner and Rev. Powell told personal stories about pre-Roe abortions. Rabbi Brickner's mother flew to Japan for an abortion in the 1960s after having been raped, and Rev. Powell went to New York City for an abortion after 1970. They pointed out that, under H.B.228, friends and relatives, even airline employees, who helped with travel out-of-state could be charged as felons.

## Telling Moments for Observers

### Rabbi Michael Ungar

**(Conservative Judaism):** The most striking observation from the day of the hearings on HB 228 for me was ...a conversation that Rabbi Brickner and I had with a "pro-life" person in the hallway. This woman had her Bible in hand and commented that Rabbi Brickner's testimony before the committee was in some way disingenuous; her basic point was that Pro-Choice people were just interpreting the verses the way we wanted to rather than looking at the "true" meaning of the verse.

Usually, in such a case, I do not even try to dispute such comments... [However] We both tried to carefully and respectfully show her verses (like Exodus 21:22-25) that have been interpreted by the Talmud and Jewish Law for nearly 2000 years to show that a fetus is not a life until it is born; she could not accept that interpretation, and told us that we were wrong. I am not sure what disturbed me more: the fact that she could not fathom that there could be more than one way of looking at a verse (i.e., her fundamentalist certainty which over the years has led to violence and persecution), or the fact that a lay Christian was lecturing two ordained rabbis about what our religion says—or what it should say."

### Rev. Mark Belletini (Unitarian Universalist):

"Coming to testify about HB 228 at the Ohio Statehouse was a rather frustrating experience.... I was especially exasperated when the first woman to speak against choice quoted the early first century Rabbi Hillel the Elder, but ignorantly attributed his words instead to an evangelical writer of note, Francis Schaeffer. This set a bad tone as far as I was concerned, and nothing alleviated that for me. The loud misinformation offered by this woman was combined with an actually shocking condescending attitude toward anyone with any other opinion but her own. It was clear when she was done

*continued on page 5*

*As a religious pro-choice person, what can you do during this election campaign? You can ask the candidates questions!*

*You can help defend reproductive choice in this crucial election year by asking the questions at right at forums, debates and fundraisers.*

*A "yes" answer shows a commitment to pro-choice values.*

## Circuit Judge Finds Ohio Law Restricting RU486 Unconstitutional —Sept. 27

The law, passed in 2004, required doctors to follow FDA recommendations which limited the use of mifepristone (RU-486) to the first seven weeks of pregnancy, and required specific medications and three visits. Since the introduction of mifepristone, doctors have found that the amount of medication could be reduced and the pill is effective later in pregnancy. Current practices save time and money, and avoid surgery for many women. The Court of Appeals ruled that the law was vague, confusing for doctors, and had no exception for health reasons. The appeals court sent it back to Sixth Circuit Judge Susan Dlott, and she ruled that the law should be rejected entirely. Attorney General Jim Petro has not decided whether to appeal.

## Director Speaks on Religious Liberty

On Sept. 5, Barb Avery participated in a panel on religious liberty sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance at the Thurber Center, along with speakers on evolution, humanism, LGBT issues, and WeBelieveOhio. She spoke about how H.B. 228, the total ban on abortion, would affect reproductive health and religious liberty in Ohio.

**ACTION:** See [www.ohiorcrc.org](http://www.ohiorcrc.org) at Presentations for Barb's written statements.

## Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice Election Questions for State and National Candidates in 2006

Be sure to ask the last question of all candidates.

### For candidates to the U.S. Congress:

- 1** Will you support "Prevention First" legislation to help reduce unintended pregnancies by improving access to family planning?
- 2** Will you support funding for medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education programs?
- 3** Will you support legislation to provide funds to educate the public about the value of emergency contraception (the morning-after pill) in preventing unintended pregnancies? *(Candidates may want to know that emergency contraception does not affect an existing pregnancy.)*
- 4** Will you support legislation requiring hospitals that receive taxpayer funding to provide emergency contraception to victims of rape and sexual assault?
- 5** Will you support payment of the United States' fair share of funding for the United Nations Population Fund, which provides family planning to the world's poorest people?
- 6** Will you support the Access to Legal Pharmaceuticals Act, which requires pharmacists and pharmacies to fill prescriptions for oral contraceptives, including emergency contraception, without delay, and without subjecting a customer to humiliation or harassment?
- 7** Will you support overturning the law that prohibits military women from obtaining an abortion in military hospitals, even if they pay for it themselves?

### For Senate candidates only

- 8** Will you oppose nominees for the federal courts whose records show that they are hostile to reproductive rights and women's rights?

### For candidates to the Ohio Legislature:

- 1** Will you oppose H.B. 239 (or its Senate equivalent) which would prevent the use of state funds, state facilities, and state employees for abortions (except to save the life of a woman), and would eliminate insurance coverage for abortions for state employees in the case of rape and incest?
- 2** Will you oppose H.B. 228 (or its Senate equivalent) which bans abortion without any exception for the life or health of a woman, and which makes second degree felons of anyone who commits an abortion (including a woman who self-aborts) and anyone who transports a woman, or causes her to be transported across state or counties lines? (This may include clergy and counselors, as well as family and friends.)
- 3** Will you support Prevention First Ohio, a bill that would reduce unintended pregnancies by increasing funds for family planning and improving access to medically accurate sex education, contraception and emergency contraception, as well as lifting current restrictions on abortion, which primarily impact the poor?

### For all candidates:

**Do** you think that restrictions on contraception and abortion, including a ban on abortion, interfere with the religious liberty of Ohioans? (For example, some religions and many religious people do not believe that life, or personhood, begins at conception. And many religious people place a high value on women and believe they should make decisions about their reproductive health based on their own faith, beliefs, and conscience, in consultation with family, friends, and advisors of their own choosing.)

## Faith and Choices: First Workshop Held

Dr. Hilda Glazer, Nancy Hinden, and Susan Bugenstein took the *Faith and Choices* leader training at Temple Beth Shalom, (Reform Judaism), on July 12 and then led a two part Faith and Choices workshop for about 20 people. In the first session, Rabbi Howard Apothaker gave the philosophical background of the position of Judaism on abortion. The leaders then used the exercises provided in the *F & C* curriculum to explore abortion issues, modifying one exercise by writing answers to questions about abortion on post-its and sticking them on the wall under the questions. The leaders read them, identified themes and reported to the group.

This session left them wanting to know more, so at the second session they studied all the Christian statements, as well as the Jewish ones. According to Hilda, they came to a "broader justice perspective--that a woman needs to come to her own decision based on her own beliefs, relying on her significant others, including clergy, if she chooses."

Their action plan includes obtaining more education, looking at the new Union of Reform Judaism sex education program for their youth, and writing questions for candidates in this election. When Hilda received Ohio RCRC's *Questions for Candidates* by email, they were what they needed, and she distributed them to the entire group. "The training was comprehensive and prepared us well," Hilda said, "and everything in the curriculum worked as it should!"

**ACTION:** Call Ohio RCRC to discuss having a Faith and Choices workshop for your congregation, starting with a training for two or more workshop leaders. See dates on page six.

## Website Improvement

Chris Wainwright and Barb Avery are updating and expanding our website by adding pages on elections, lobbying, SYRF activities,

and current events, such as Faith and Choices training dates and clergy seminars.

**ACTION:** See [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) for new web pages and updates.

## SYRF (Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom) Report on D.C. Student Summit

by Jessica Arteaga, leader of SYRF, Case Western Reserve University

"I attended SYRF's bi-annual Summit in June with about 50 other students from across the country. We came together to share ideas about future SYRF programs, build friendships, and meet others who strive in the fight for reproductive health and health care from a spiritual perspective. Highlights of the weekend included meeting Shelby Knox, from the movie "The Education of Shelby Knox," about abstinence-only education at her Texas high school, and a spectacular closing worship. I was a part of a breakout session dealing with how to bring SYRF to a college campus. I talked about the activities we have here at Case, places to search out allies, and the organizational skills needed to accomplish the tasks. It was a wonderful and refreshing experience to meet others who are fighting for justice and working for the greater good."

Jessica also spoke to Oberlin students after the Susan Wood event on September 26 about how to start a college SYRF group.

**ACTION:** To find out how to start a SYRF group in your college or congregation, contact Ohio RCRC. See [www.syrf.org](http://www.syrf.org) for general information. To find out about SYRF activities at Case, email Jessica at [jaa22@case.edu](mailto:jaa22@case.edu).

## Call to Justice Grant to Enhance Lobbying

RCRC has given Ohio RCRC a grant to initiate a "CTJ" program to expand our state and national lobbying effectiveness. We are asking members to send us their own and other pro-choice supporters' names and email addresses for our Email Advocacy Network. The grant requires us to install a new data system created for RCRC affiliates: *ebase RCRC*. Lloyd Muench has been hired as CTJ Program Assistant to help implement the CTJ. Our goal is 75 new email lobbyists. Let's get more and flood our representatives!

**Action:** Send your name and email address to [ohiorcrc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ohiorcrc@sbcglobal.net), along with names and addresses of pro-choice friends and acquaintances. Or write them on the enclosed card and mail it in the enclosed envelope.

## Dr. Susan Wood Speaks on Emergency Contraception

Susan Wood, Ph.D. is the former Assistant Commissioner for Women's Health at the Food and Drug Administration where she directed the FDA Office of Women's Health and served as the "champion for women's health inside and outside the agency," focusing on areas such as inclusion of women in clinical studies. In August 2005, Dr. Wood resigned on principle in response to the decision announced by FDA leadership to once again delay approval of Plan B emergency contraception (EC), despite the recommendation of FDA scientific staff and advisory committees. Dr. Wood has offered to speak at events sponsored by RCRC or its affiliates in cities where she has prior speaking engagements, in order to engage the

religious community in the discussion of EC.

On Sept. 26, Ohio RCRC, along with First Church (UCC), Hillel, and many campus groups, sponsored her presentation at Oberlin College, on "Women's Health, Emergency Contraception, and the F.D.A." attended by 25.

On Sept. 27, a breakfast with Susan Wood, co-sponsored by Ohio RCRC, Planned Parenthood of Cleveland, and paid for by the United Church of Christ, for pro-choice clergy and laypersons was held at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and attended by 20. Director Avery's introduction of Dr. Wood and a summary of her presentation and answers to questions can be found on our website, [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) at Presentations.

## New RCRC Northeast Regional Coordinator Visits Ohio RCRC

Matthew Fox made a weekend visit to Ohio RCRC, with his partner, Meg West, on their way from California to New York City, where Matthew will have an office in their home in Brooklyn. Matthew will provide support and guidance for RCRC affiliates in the northeast quadrant, and work with Barbara Kavadias, the Field Services Director, to provide training for clergy and affiliate leadership. He and Meg visited the Irish Festival, ate at La Chatelaine, met with the Ohio RCRC Board to discuss the future, and socialized with the Board and volunteers at a reception on Sunday evening.

## Ohio RCRC Board Initiative

The Board will be focusing on increasing membership by pro-choice denominations, congregations, and faith groups, who can appoint governing representatives to the Board. Individuals with specific expertise can also be elected by the Board. Membership of groups from all over the state is encouraged!

**ACTION:** *If you would like to represent your pro-choice religious group or help to garner its membership, call the Ohio RCRC office or email us for information.*

## Hearing on Total Ban

*continued from page 2*

that she would be the first to vote to change the national motto E Pluribus Unum (One from many) to E Unum, Unum (From one, one.) Even though that is a plainly false perception of early United States history. Frankly, it was a painful and excruciating long hour, that very first speech, and it soured me pretty bad...."

"Later, I heard those who spoke out for reproductive choice confining themselves to reasonable arguments, and choosing to not let steam come out of their ears....It was clear that the House men and women listening had already made up their mind about things one way or the other, and only one man asked hard questions of the bombastic person who first spoke..."

**ACTION:** *Go to [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) to read pro-choice clergy testimony and comments by observers. Click on "Lobbying" to find sample letters from members of pro-choice denominations opposing H.B. 228 and supporting the Ohio Prevention First Act. (To read about this act, click on "Prevention First Act" under Lobbying.) Email your letter to Ohio House Health Committee Chair, Rep. John White, and to [ohiorc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ohiorc@sbcglobal.net). We will send it to the whole Committee.*

## Many thanks...To these volunteers

**Emily Boberg Court**—for sending out renewal letters to members monthly, for installing Ebase RCRC and for consistent support at the office and attendance at gatherings.

**Chris Wainwright**—for installing "Contributor" which allows us to change our Website from his computer and our office computer, and for keeping the website updated.

**Bonnie Welty**—for inputting all of the data about donors into our Membership Plus data system, helping with the transfer to Ebase RCRC, and printing out hundred of labels.

**Sheila Seifert**, Treasurer—for faithfully and accurately producing monthly statements of our ever more complicated finances.

**MaryAnna MacQueen**, retiring Board President—for many years of leadership and faithful service, and for being Interim Secretary.

**Janet Mangini and Bonnie Welty**—for taking on leadership responsibility as Co-Presidents of the Ohio RCRC Board.



*Carly Mcvey, Colin and Liam*

## ...And consultants

**Carly McVey**—for

her willingness to become the Program Director for the Faith and Choice program, while being mom to Colin (3) and Liam (2).

**Lloyd Muench**—for leaping into the breach to troubleshoot our computer glitches, taking on the position of Program Assistant of the Call to Justice, and learning to use our new data base and training others.

## Volunteer Opportunities

If you can help, call 614-221-3636 or email [ohiorc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ohiorc@sbcglobal.net)

*Key: H = can be done at home*

*O = at our office near Broad & Rt. 71*

**Thank you to donors.** Type

names, amount in form letter, address envelopes, print. (H)

**Create media data base.**

Make phone calls to update statewide media data.Type. (O, H)

**Press releases.** Send out press releases by email. If interested, help to write. (H or O)

**Website: graphics.** Use artistic skills to improve website graphics. (O, or with key, H)

**Website: updates.** Write text about new developments and events. (H, with email)

**All Options Clergy Counseling Seminar Manual:**

Compile Resources section. For Nov. 15 AOCC seminar, collect information on Central Ohio resources: abortion, adoption, and parenting. Type on computer. (H)

**Filing.** Type file labels, put on files, file in cabinets. Help file paper in existing files. (O)

# Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities

## Support Pro-choice South Dakota

House parties: Sunday afternoon, Oct. 21. Organize cell phone banks, using free weekend minutes, to call S.D. voters to encourage them to vote to repeal state ban on abortion. Names, phone numbers, scripts and food provided.

Call Ohio RCRC to volunteer your home for a house party and for information.

## Faith & Choices Workshop Leaders Training

**Dates: Thur. Oct. 12, Wed. Oct. 24, and Thur. Nov. 9** from 7-8:30 p.m. Contact Carly McVey at 614-329-7081 or carly.mcvey@sbcglobal.net to participate on these dates, or to arrange a training at your church or synagogue.

## Clergy Seminars:

**All Options Clergy Counseling seminar—Wed., Nov. 15, Columbus.** AOCC seminar will be at First Congregational Church, 444 E. Broad St., 9:30-4:00 (light lunch). Fee: \$25.

**Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Choice—Thur., Nov. 16, Cleveland.** PCRL seminar will be at First Unitarian Church, 21600 Shaker Heights Blvd., 9:30-4:00 Fee: \$25.

To register for either seminar, send a check for \$25 to Ohio RCRC, P.O. Box 82204, Columbus OH 43202, indicating which seminar in the memo line. Email or call Ohio RCRC for directions.



Oberlin students gather with SYRF Leader Jessica Arteaga (third from left), Dr. Susan Wood (third from right) and Ohio RCRC Director Barb Avery (right).

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