



NARAL
Pro-Choice Washington



PRESS RELEASE

January 8, 2012

Contact:

Alison Mondt, NARAL Pro-Choice Washington
(508) 380-9375 (cell)

Sara Kiesler, Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest
(206) 861-7514, (206) 650-8590

Lisa Stone, Legal Voice
(425) 306-4761

Women's Health Advocates Unveil Groundbreaking Legislation Requiring All Health Insurance Policies Sold in Washington to Cover Abortion

All women, regardless of income, deserve equal access to health insurance coverage for abortion care and other basic reproductive health care.

SEATTLE, WA – At a press conference this afternoon, Rep. Eileen Cody (D-34) announced the Reproductive Parity Act, vital legislation that requires all health insurance policies sold in Washington that cover maternity care to cover abortion care. Rep. Cody was joined by Rep. Laurie Jenkins (D-27), Sen. Karen Keiser (D-33) and fellow pro-choice legislators, as well as an uninsured woman, a health care provider and a member of the clergy, all of whom discussed how this legislation will improve women's access to basic reproductive health care.

Washington State has a long history of ensuring a woman's ability to make the decision to have an abortion, but as Washington proceeds with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Washington women could face increased barriers in their ability to access reproductive health care, including abortion services. Anti-choice politicians in Congress tried to undermine the ACA and inserted a provision to roll back reproductive health care protections that states like Washington value. The Reproductive Parity Act addresses that problem and helps ensure that Washington's health care system remains fair and equitable for all women. Following in the state's pro-choice tradition, Washington will once again lead the nation as the first state to establish in law that abortion is part of basic health care, and must be included in comprehensive health insurance coverage.

"This bill is about ensuring that all Washington women have health insurance coverage that includes the full range of reproductive health care options, including abortion," said Rep. Cody, prime House sponsor of the Reproductive Parity Act and Chair of the House Health Care and Wellness Committee. "As we implement the federal health care reform law, we need to ensure that we have no erosion of our existing laws in Washington that protect women's reproductive rights." Sen. Steve Hobbs (D-44) is sponsoring companion legislation in the Senate.

Starting in 2014, every person will be required to purchase health insurance coverage, and individuals and small businesses will be able to purchase their insurance at a subsidized rate through a new health insurance exchange. The bill ensures that women entering the insurance market will have abortion

coverage, whether they purchase their insurance within the exchange or outside of the exchange. This legislation preserves and strengthens Washington state law protecting the right to choose and expands access to reproductive health care for all women.

The lawmakers were joined by Christine Kocsis, a woman who had an abortion when she had no insurance. This legislation will improve access to reproductive health care for women like her who find themselves without other options.

“I was lucky. I was able to scrape enough money together to follow through with the decision that was right for me at the time. Other women are not so lucky,” Kocsis said. “I’m here today because I want to make sure that if a woman in Washington is purchasing insurance, that she has every option available to her to make the right decisions, with her family and her faith, for a bright and healthy life and future.”

Dr. Anna Kaminski spoke of how this legislation will remedy existing gaps in reproductive health care coverage.

“Even in a state as pro-choice as Washington, women have no guarantee that their insurance company will cover the second most common surgical procedure they may need in their lifetimes,” Dr. Kaminski said. “Insurers already have to cover maternity care; pregnancy decisions should not be influenced by whether a plan will pay for an abortion or not.” One in three women will have an abortion by the age of 45.

“The fact of the matter is that women of all faiths have abortions,” said Elizabeth Patrick, a minister at University Baptist Church in Seattle. “Seventy-two percent of women who have had an abortion report a religious affiliation, 28 percent of them being Catholic. If an insurance plan covers one kind of pregnancy option, it should cover another.”

Washington Women Matter, a broad coalition of organizations supporting women’s health, has come together to advocate for the passage of the Reproductive Parity Act, led by NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest, Legal Voice and the National Organization for Women. This coalition is educating Washington’s pro-choice majority about this legislation and generating legislator contacts in support of a fair and equitable health care system that includes access to abortion care for all Washington women.

###

Washington Women Matter on [Facebook](#)

[NARAL Pro-Choice Washington](#) is a grassroots pro-choice political advocacy organization. NARAL works to protect every woman’s right to access the full range of reproductive health options, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion.

[Planned Parenthood Votes! Northwest](#) (PPVNW) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization educating Washingtonians and policy-makers about reproductive health issues. PPVNW lobbies and educates to advance Planned Parenthood’s mission and also engages in limited electoral activities.

[Legal Voice](#) is a nonprofit women’s rights legal organization that pursues justice for all women and girls in the Northwest through ground-breaking litigation, legislative advocacy, and educational tools to help individuals understand their rights.