



Advocacy Update

Sent February 15, 2012

Health Care Coverage for Birth Control

Women's health care advocates have been deeply involved in major issues during the past few weeks. On January 20, 2012 the Department of Health and Human Services announced that contraceptive services would be covered by health insurance policies under the Affordable Care Act, without associated deductibles or co-pays, and that only purely sectarian organizational employers would be exempt from this requirement. Since then there has been much heated discussion regarding how the new policy should apply to religiously affiliated hospitals or universities. Exemptions were sought by the Catholic Church and others who raised religious liberty concerns for employers who would be required to make contraceptive services available in violation of their religious tenets. Those supporting availability of these services argued that employees should be entitled and empowered to make health care choices based on their own faith and not that of their employer.

On Thursday, January 9th, WRJ's Executive Director Marla Feldman signed, on behalf of WRJ, a statement by several mainstream religious leaders in support of the Obama Administration ruling on contraceptive coverage because of its importance to the health and well-being of all women. The full statement is attached. WRJ has been working for access to birth control information since 1935.

On Friday, President Obama announced a compromise, indicating that religious employers would be exempted from the requirement to provide contraception, but insurance companies would have to provide it, without cost to the employees.

The Reform Movement, pleased by the President's announcement of the compromise, issued a statement in which Rabbi David Saperstein wrote: "We commend the Obama Administration for ensuring both access to contraception for all women and the robust protection of religious autonomy."