

# Pharmacy discrimination: another slap at women's rights

Members of the state House of Representatives, all men of course, are proposing bills to counteract the executive directive given by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, to force pharmacies to fill prescriptions for birth control medication called "the morning after pill." The pill must be taken within 72 hours of sexual intercourse or it will not work, and the sooner, the better. Some druggists have refused to dispense the medication because they say it conflicts with their religious beliefs. Rep. Ron Stevens, R-Mulberry, is quoted as saying, "The governor is forcing a few pharmacists to choose between their religion and their livelihood."

I say that in the public arena, religious beliefs do not trump individual civil rights, and if you question that, I suggest you study the United States Constitution. And if pharmacists cannot fill legal prescriptions from physicians, they had better get out of the business. Notice that I called this medication a birth control pill because that is what it is — a very heavy dose of the ordinary birth control drug. It does not cause an abortion, it prevents pregnancy, and according to such groups as Planned Parenthood, more widespread use of the emergency contraception could prevent as many as 800,000 surgical abortions a year.

This whole debate is never about great concern for human life, because the same bunch likes guns and war. It is just another slap in the face of women's rights and a lack of concern for the lives of women. Consider the woman in Tucson, Arizona who tried to get the medication after she had been raped. She called dozens of pharmacies and found many did not stock the drug and refused to direct her to a drug store that did. Walgreen druggists in Illinois have refused to fill prescriptions and have been suspended from their jobs because Walgreens doesn't want to break the law.

It happens that because of our biology, women are the most responsible for the consequences of sexual activity. What people still can't handle is that women can now have sex without getting pregnant, and for men, that is such a loss of control. Apparently society still thinks it has to dictate to a woman how to behave, even while trampling on her individual rights as a United States citizen.

In this context, the most responsible act of a woman is to practice birth control. The most responsible act of a couple is to practice birth control. The most irresponsible act of a man and woman is to have children who are not wanted or cannot be provided for.

We know that religion is used as a front for

lots of disgusting and dictatorial statements and actions in this country, and these people have every right to say and do what they want, in the privacy of their own homes, church or even on the street corner, but not at the expense of the civil rights or religious beliefs of the rest of us.

We must remember that in this country, 25 percent of our children live in poverty. To help prevent AIDS and poverty in countries in Africa, for example, we should not just be sending money, but handing out condoms by the truckload. However, under the direction of the current administration in Washington, our country will not support a foreign policy that includes education or equipment for birth control. No wonder the rest of the world views us as world-class idiots. We have less respect for our own citizens than any other modern, industrialized country and many of the developing countries.

More than 50 percent of our population is women, but active discrimination and prejudice are still with us. None of the victories for women's rights came without tremendous battles and opposition. All one has to do is look at the lack of women in the Illinois legislature and Congress to sense the underlying sentiment in this country, and certainly in the Midwest, that women are still considered second class citizens whose lives are not as important as an egg and sperm



that haven't even formed another life.

Make no mistake; this is a battle against women. Please contact your state legislator and ask him to support our civil rights — and not undermine Governor Blagojevich's proper action to do so.

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Feb. 2, 2006