

May 9, 2006

Dear Representative:

As organizations committed to public health and the welfare of the women serving our country in the nation's armed services, we urge you to support Representative Michael Michaud's and Representative Tim Ryan's amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 5122). The Michaud/Ryan Amendment will ensure that emergency contraception is available by prescription at all military health facilities. This important measure will help protect the reproductive health and rights of U.S. military women and family members stationed throughout the world.

Emergency contraception, often referred to as "the morning after pill," prevents pregnancy after contraceptive failure or unprotected sex, including sexual assault. Emergency contraception reduces the risk of pregnancy by as much as 89 percent if the first dose is taken within days of unprotected sex, but it is more effective the sooner it is taken. Emergency contraception will not affect an existing pregnancy; rather, emergency contraception, which consists of the same hormones found in birth control pills, *prevents* pregnancy.

Providing access to emergency contraception for our military women serves the important public health goal of reducing the number of unintended pregnancies and thus reducing the need for abortion. Studies estimate that increased use of emergency contraception accounted for up to 43 percent of the total decline in abortions between 1994 and 2000; in 2000 alone, an estimated 51,000 abortions were averted by women's use of emergency contraception. (Rachel K. Jones, Jacqueline E. Darroch and Stanley K. Henshaw, *Contraceptive Use Among U.S. Women Having Abortions in 2000-2001*, Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health Volume 34, Number 6, November/December 2002, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3429402.html>). Indeed, major medical groups, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, and the American Public Health Association, have all supported making emergency contraception more readily accessible.

The Department of Defense has previously recognized the need for access to emergency contraception for military women: in 2002, the Department of Defense added the contraceptive to its Basic Core Formulary, making emergency contraception available by prescription at military health facilities. A recent press report, however, reveals that one month later, without explanation, Defense Department officials removed the contraceptive from the Formulary. (Brian Alexander, *The New Lies About Women's Health*, Glamour Magazine, available at <http://www.glamour.com/features/healthandbody/articles/060403fewohe>). The Michaud/Ryan Amendment would address this omission. Surely, military women should not have less access to emergency contraception than civilian women.

Moreover, increased access to emergency contraception will help meet the needs of those military women who are victims of sexual assault. A 2003 study found that 30 percent of female U.S. military veterans report having been raped or suffered a rape attempt during their military service, and military officials report that there were 2,374 reported cases of sexual assault involving service members reported to military criminal investigators last year – a 40

percent increase from 2004. A military woman facing the tragedy of a sexual assault must have every resource available to meet her medical needs, including, if she chooses, access to emergency contraception to enable her to prevent a pregnancy resulting from rape.

At a time when we are expecting so much from our military women, it is critical that we do everything we can to meet their health care needs. The Michaud/Ryan Amendment is a commonsense measure that will prevent unintended pregnancy and reduce the need for abortion; we urge you to support it.

American Civil Liberties Union
American Association of University Women
American Jewish Committee
American Society for Emergency Contraception
Americans for Democratic Action
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Catholics for a Free Choice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Choice USA
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project
Family Planning Advocates of New York State
Guttmacher Institute
Ibis Reproductive Health
Institute for Reproductive Health Access
Kentucky A-Fund, Inc.
Law Students for Choice, Georgetown University Law Center
Legal Momentum
Mary Wohlford Foundation
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NARAL Pro-Choice New York
National Abortion Federation
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
New Hampshire Citizens for Sustainable Population
Northwest Women's Law Center
People For the American Way
Pharmacy Access Partnership
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Planned Parenthood Los Angeles
Planned Parenthood of New York City

Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates
Population Connection
Pro-Choice Public Education Project
Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
Reproductive Health Access Project
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.
The Miles Foundation
Union of Reform Judaism
Women of Reform Judaism

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