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Protecting Access to Reproductive Health Care and Abortion As An Electoral Priority

New NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund Poll Results

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

While the continuing economic struggles of every day Americans played a central role in the 2014 election, protecting women's access to health care and abortion played an important part as well. A new NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund survey in four key Senate battleground states demonstrates that voters support women's reproductive health, want to support candidates who do as well, and will vote on the issue. There is no evidence to support the contention that a focus on the "war on women" "cost" Democrats their elections.

Key findings include:

- **Access to women's health care was one of several issues forming the core critique of anti-choice Republican candidates.** For many voters, including key blocs of Independents and moderate voters, opposition to access to women's health care can be an immediate disqualifier of Republican candidates. Overall, the charge that a candidate "opposes a woman's right to a safe, legal abortion in all circumstances, including rape, incest, and when the health of the woman is in danger" was the most persuasive reason to vote against him or her. Indeed, many of the Republican candidates in these Senate battleground states made an effort to moderate their positions on abortion and access to birth control to come more in line with mainstream views.
- **Democratic candidates had a greater advantage on the issues of women's health care than on any other issue in the campaign.** By a 57-point margin, voters in these states believed the Democratic candidate would do a better job protecting women's access to safe, legal abortion and give the Democrat a 32-point advantage on protecting

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women's access to health care like cancer screenings and birth control. These are both margins significantly larger than the ones Democrats received on core issues including Social Security and Medicare, education, and economic populism.

- Access to women’s health care mattered to voters — they paid attention and it impacted their voting decisions.** Though the economy and jobs were the dominant issue in these states, access to women’s health care played a key role in the way people voted. Eighty-six percent said, “protecting women’s access to healthcare like cancer screenings and birth control” was an important issue in their voting decision, ranking it alongside key issues like health care, education, and Social Security/Medicare in terms of significance to voters. In regression analysis, protecting a woman’s access to health care and to abortion were the strongest predictors of voting Democratic, along with improving education, and higher than Social Security and Medicare (see appendix).

On the whole, campaigns’ inclusion of women’s health added value to pro-choice Democratic candidates’ campaigns. As part of a broader narrative, these issues helped contribute to Democrats running a net 5 points better among women this year than in 2010, despite the 2014 electorate being as or more Republican than four years ago¹.

Moreover, in a tough year for Democrats with a conservative leaning electorate, personhood ballot measures were defeated by large margins in North Dakota and Colorado. And the national exit polls showed a 52 percent majority favors legal abortion². In this battleground research, a significant bloc of voters in these states said they would not consider abortion for themselves, but also oppose restricting access for others. When this notion of personal morality was considered, 78 percent of this electorate held the position that the government should not restrict abortion access.

Figure 1: Issue Importance Battery, Percent Responding Very Important

I believe having an abortion is morally acceptable and should be legal	26%	} 78%
I am personally against abortion for myself and my family, but I don't believe government should prevent a woman from making that decision for herself.	52%	
I believe having an abortion is morally wrong and should be illegal.	19%	

I am going read you some statements about the issue of abortion, and please tell me which one comes closest to your own view.

Survey Findings

- Democratic candidates held much bigger advantages on the issues of women’s health than any other issue in the campaigns.** Across these Senate battleground states, the Democratic candidates held 8- to 12-point leads on core Democratic issues from schools to Social Security to the middle class. But the largest Democratic advantages were on protecting women’s access to safe, legal abortion (57 points) and to health care (32 points)

¹ Data from 2014 national exit polling as of 11/11/14: www.cnn.com/election/2014/results/race/house#exit-polls.

² Data from 2014 national exit polling as of 11/11/14: www.cnn.com/election/2014/results/race/house#exit-polls.

— far greater than the partisanship in these states. Moreover, protecting access to safe, legal abortion was the only opening for Democratic candidates to peel off support from Republican women — they favored the Democrat by 25 points on this issue while siding with the Republican by at least 29 points on every other issue tested.

- *Women’s health gave Democrats an edge with key non-Democratic voting blocs.* The Democratic advantages on these issues were even larger among Independent women, who gave them a 60-point and 41-point edge, respectively.
- *Women’s health resonates among men.* Men in these battleground states gave the Democrats a 52-point advantage on abortion and a 22-point edge on women’s health care. In Colorado specifically, men sided with the Democrats by 51 points on abortion and 19 points on women’s health care. In contrast, on the economy, Social Security/Medicare, education, and the middle class, men favored the Republican candidate.
- *Women’s health provided an even bigger proportional advantage in Colorado.* In Colorado, the gap between these two issues and all others was even wider than across the battleground states.

■ **Figure 2:** Job Comparison Battery, Total Democrat Better-Republican Better

	Total (Dem-Rep)	Colorado (Dem-Rep)
Protecting women's access to safe, legal abortion	+57	+55
Protecting women's access to healthcare like cancer screenings and birth control	+32	+30
Ensuring that women earn equal pay for equal work	+22	+13
Improving education and public schools	+12	+4
Protecting Social Security and Medicare	+12	+5
Promoting economic policies that help working women and families	+11	+3
Taking on the corporate interests and fighting for the middle class	+9	+4
Responding to the Ebola virus	-3	-4
Dealing with terrorism and the threat from ISIS	-24	-22
Reducing taxes and cutting government spending	-29	-32

Please tell me whether, overall, you think (THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE) or (THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) would do a better job with this issue.

- **Women’s health and personhood were very compelling reasons to vote against the Republican candidates.** On the whole, all messages tested in this survey scored high and in the same range. The following chart shows that arguments surrounding women’s health issues and abortion were every bit — if not more — powerful than any other issue used significantly in these campaigns. In fact, the most intensely persuasive critique of the Republican candidates centered on abortion. In Colorado, a gap between the women’s

health/abortion negatives and all others emerged. Moreover, there were successful Democratic Senate candidates in states like Michigan and New Hampshire, who used choice in the critique of their Republican opponents.

■ **Figure 3:** Republican Negatives, Percent Responding Very Persuasive

	Total	Colorado
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) opposes a woman's right to a safe, legal abortion in all circumstances, including rape, incest, and when the health of the woman is in danger	45	45
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) wants to give tax breaks to the corporate special interests but raise taxes on the middle class, small businesses, and seniors	42	38
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) supports defunding Planned Parenthood and denying women access to cancer screenings, and birth control.	42	42
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) supports allowing bosses make personal healthcare decisions for their female employees by denying them coverage for birth control.	41	40
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) opposes raising the minimum wage and is against a plan to make college more affordable	40	36
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) supports ending the Medicare guarantee by turning it into a voucher program and privatizing Social Security.	40	33
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) would allow women to be paid less than men for equal work and would let insurance companies charge women more than men.	40	41
(PERSONHOOD W/O ABORTION) (THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) supports a plan that could interfere with personal, private medical decisions relating to birth control.	40	42
(PERSONHOOD W/ ABORTION) (THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE) supports a plan that could interfere with personal, private medical decisions relating to birth control and ban access to safe and legal abortion.	40	41
(THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE)'s campaign was funded by the out-of-state billionaire Koch brothers who want huge tax breaks for big oil companies and corporations that ship jobs overseas	40	35
<i>Please tell me whether this is a very persuasive reason to vote against (THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE), a somewhat persuasive reason, a little persuasive, or not at all a persuasive reason to vote against (THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE).</i>		

- Protecting women’s access to health care was an important voting issue in these states.** The economy and jobs dominated the debate, ranking as the most important voting issue across the battleground states. Still, nearly six-in-ten voters reported that protecting women’s access to health care was a very important issue to them in deciding how to vote. In regression analysis, after controlling for the independent effect of partisanship, religiosity, ideology, education, marital status and other demographics, protecting women’s access to health care and abortion were the strongest predictors of voting for a Democratic candidate (see appendix for full results).

About The Survey

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice America and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted this survey among 1,400 November 2014 voters in Colorado, Iowa, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. The survey included oversamples in Colorado and North Carolina, for a total of 400 interviews in each of those two states and 300 in each of Iowa and New Hampshire.

The survey was conducted by live professional interviewers between November 2 and 5, 2014. Respondents reached prior to the closing of the polls who had not voted early were screened using a tight hybrid methodology to ensure they would vote. Thirty percent of all interviews were conducted on a cell phone.

The sample for this survey was drawn randomly from a list of registered voters and stratified by the counties within each state. Quotas were assigned to reflect the expected contribution of these areas to the total electorate. The sample reflects the demographic composition of the November 2014 electorate according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, exit poll data from the National Election Pool, and several distinct voter files.

The total sample is subject to a margin of error of +/-2.6 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; the margin of error for each of the Colorado and North Carolina samples is +/-4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval. Margin of error is higher among subgroups.