

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM CONVERSATION GUIDE

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THE DECISION OF IF, WHEN, AND HOW TO HAVE A CHILD IS DEEPLY PERSONAL.



For many women, the decision when and if to become a parent is one of the biggest choices they make. For decades, many on the far-right have sought to demonize women who seek abortions, defund providers who perform this vital, legal health care service, and criticize elected officials who support a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion. However, we trust women. Women and their families have the right to make their own decisions, and we know we must defend that right.

Throughout the campaign process, you may be asked about your views on abortion and reproductive rights. We have created a conversation guide to help you in your discussions.



A WOMAN'S DECISION ABOUT HER OWN HEALTH CARE



Q: Where do you stand on abortion rights?

- The decision of if, when, and how to have a child is deeply personal. A woman and her family must make the decision that is right for them. Politicians should not interfere.
- A woman's decision about her own health care should be made between her and her doctor.
- The freedom to decide if and when to have children is fundamental to ensuring women are equal and full participants in society.
- *Key point:* Economic security is extremely difficult to achieve without reproductive freedom, including abortion access.
 - Deciding if and when to have a child is one of the biggest economic decisions a woman can make.
 - For women, economic security is extremely difficult to achieve without the freedom to decide if, when, and how to raise a family.

- This issue affects a woman's ability to continue her education, rise up in her career, care for the family she already has, and plan for her future.
- Families must be able to decide what is best for them. This is a fundamental human right.
- When laws make abortion services prohibitively expensive or entirely inaccessible, this undermines the economic security women need to raise happy, healthy families.

Q: Do you support abortion later in pregnancy? Do you support abortions after 20 weeks?

- Abortion bans prevent health care providers from giving their patients the best health care possible in what can often be a very difficult situation.
- We've seen what happens when politicians interfere in these deeply personal medical decisions and tie doctors' hands. In states that have passed laws like this, some women and their families have been put into unimaginable situations—such as needing to end a pregnancy for serious medical reasons but being unable to do so.

Q: Why don't you support commonsense regulations, such as ensuring doctors performing abortions have admitting privileges?

- Unfortunately, laws like these are often wolves in sheep's clothing. Instead of protecting women, they actually make it nearly impossible for women to get the care they need, by placing onerous regulations on what is a very safe and legal medical procedure.
- Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures performed in the United States. Data, including from the CDC, shows that abortion has a safety record of over 99 percent.¹
- Instead of making access to abortion more restrictive and using laws to virtually shut down health care facilities, we need to support women and families as they make very personal decisions.

¹ https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/6014/2194/2001/Protect_Safe_and_Legal_Abortion.pdf



NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS WITH THOSE WHO HAVE PERSONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS



Q: I personally believe abortion is wrong. It goes against my deeply held religious beliefs. How can you support it?

- People have personal and religious beliefs about abortion, and I'm not asking them to change those beliefs. This is not about a person's beliefs; this is about legal access to a medical procedure that allows families to determine their own futures.
- We cannot impose personal beliefs on others, and politicians shouldn't place their own beliefs on women. However you feel about abortion, it is not our place to decide for someone else whether or when they should become a parent.
- The decision about whether to have an abortion is a deeply personal and, at times, complex issue. Life is complicated and there are no simple answers. These decisions are best left to women, their families, and their doctors.

- Our country was founded on the idea that no individual will be persecuted for practicing their own religion and no individual should be allowed to impose their religion on others. We shouldn't be legislating personal beliefs onto others.
- This balance is critical to affording religious freedom to every American. The idea that someone can refuse services to others is contrary to our American values.

Q: Do you believe life begins at conception?

- The issue of when life begins is personal. For some, it is based on faith, and for others, it is based on science. What I do know is that politicians aren't the experts—and it's not an issue the American people want to be legislated.
- That's why it's so important women get to make their own decision about whether and when they become parents, and that politicians do not get to make that decision for them.

Q: When is a pregnancy viable?

- Doctors agree that viability is not a number. They must evaluate each individual pregnancy to determine the right care for each woman. Some pregnancies will never be viable. It is important that pregnancy decisions remain left to women in consultation with their health care providers, not politicians.

- A woman has the right to decide for herself what is best for her and her family up until 24 weeks. This is a constitutional protection granted by *Roe v. Wade*.

Q: Should employers have the right to deny their employees coverage for contraception based on religious or moral beliefs?

- Our country was founded on the idea that no individual will be persecuted for practicing their own religion *and* no individual should be allowed to impose their religion on others. This balance is critical to affording religious freedom to every American.
- The idea that someone can refuse services to others because of their own religion flies in the face of our American values.
- When women suffer because they cannot afford access to basic reproductive health care, our families and our communities suffer, too. To be equal partners in society, women must have access to the same opportunities as others. That includes the ability for a woman to control her body and make her own health care decisions.
- We've made important progress for women's health. The rate of unintended pregnancy is at a 30-year low, thanks in part to expanded access to birth control.²

² <https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2016/us-unintended-pregnancy-rate-falls-30-year-low-declines-seen-almost-all-groups>



SUPPORT FOR PLANNED PARENTHOOD, WHICH PROVIDES VITAL HEALTH CARE FOR MILLIONS



Q: Do you support funding for Planned Parenthood?

- Planned Parenthood health centers provide preventive care to 2.4 million patients every year—many of whom would have nowhere else to turn for basic health care services such as birth control, cancer screenings, STD testing and treatment, and well-woman exams.
- A responsible representative for the people of my district should stand up for the patients who depend on Planned Parenthood and the providers and clinics that allow us to live productive, healthy, full lives. That’s why I support Planned Parenthood.

Q: Do you think our federal dollars should go toward abortion services?

- Federal tax dollars are currently prohibited by law from being used for abortion in almost all circumstances.
- Let’s call this attack on health care what it really is: an attempt to shut down a health care provider for political reasons.
- “Defunding” Planned Parenthood really means legislators are preventing people from getting birth control, STD screenings and prevention, cancer screenings, and other lifesaving care at Planned Parenthood health centers.
- Attacking abortion providers harms our communities by cutting off health care from those who need it the most.

Q: What do you think about efforts to shut down Planned Parenthood health centers across the country?

- Those hurt the most would be those already struggling to get by and those already facing barriers to accessing health care—especially people of color, people with low incomes, and people who live in rural areas. Without Planned Parenthood, many patients would have nowhere else to go for care.
- Families in my district rely on the trusted health care providers at Planned Parenthood to provide critical and lifesaving care. We should support their mission and work.

- Other health care providers have made clear they could not absorb Planned Parenthood’s patients. In fact, public health experts have called the very idea that community health centers could replace Planned Parenthood “ludicrous.”³

Q: Would you block efforts to defund Planned Parenthood?

- The term “defunding” is a misnomer—Planned Parenthood is not a line item in the budget, nor is it subsidized by the federal government.
- What “defunding” would do is prohibit patients enrolled in Medicaid from getting preventive health care—including cancer screenings, birth control, well-woman exams, and STD testing and treatment—from Planned Parenthood health centers.
- Just like other hospitals and health care providers, Planned Parenthood health centers receive reimbursements under Medicaid for basic health care services, such as birth control, cancer screenings, STD testing and treatment, and well-woman exams.
- I know families who depend on Planned Parenthood. We cannot take away their health care. I do not believe that’s right or responsible. I do not support efforts to “defund.”

Q: What about community health centers?

- Politicians who claim community health centers can replace the care Planned Parenthood provides are wrong.

³ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/07/30/family-planning-budgets-crisis-before-planned-parenthood-controversy/30861853/>

- The demand for health care is far too great for community health centers (CHCs) to meet the needs of millions of women. Public health experts and CHCs themselves insist they cannot replace Planned Parenthood.

- The public health community has been clear—other providers can’t absorb Planned Parenthood’s 2.4 million patients. Losing Planned Parenthood would cause a health care disaster. Women who need a breast exam or birth control can’t wait a month or two. They need care as soon as possible, and that’s what Planned Parenthood provides.

Q: Can’t patients receive the care they need at crisis pregnancy centers?

- No. Crisis pregnancy centers use deceptive techniques to pursue a very specific agenda. No patient making a decision about her health care and economic future deserves to be lied to.



THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S PRIORITIES



Q: Should the Democratic Party have a litmus test on choice?

- People in this country support access to safe, legal abortion. We're standing with the majority of Americans in wanting to keep the decision about whether and when to have children between a woman and her doctor.
- The Democratic Party stands for core values of equality, including a woman's ability to control her own reproductive health choices. That's why in 2016, the Democratic Party came together to produce the most progressive platform for reproductive health care in the party's history.
 - It didn't just seek to protect abortion access—it sought to expand it so no one could be denied reproductive health care, including abortion access, because of how much money they have.
- Everyone has their own personal beliefs about abortion, and no one should change their deeply held beliefs. However, there's a difference between your personal beliefs and legislating those personal beliefs onto others.

- It is important for Democrats to be united on the fact that every woman and family must choose for themselves what is right for them. It is not the job of Congress or any other legislative body to determine a family's future or take choices away from women.
- We will never be able to move our country forward if we leave women behind. That's why 4 million marched after the 2017 inauguration—and continue to show up across the country.
- Take one look at the GOP's priorities—they spent years trying to take health care away from millions of people, are attacking access to birth control, and are doing all they can to make abortion outright illegal. What we need is to stand up for women's health and rights, and fight against these dangerous attacks.



PRIORITIES OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM



Q: How do you feel about the push to restrict abortion/reproductive health care?

- With all the crises our country faces, it's appalling that so many politicians spend their time—and taxpayer dollars—fighting endless wars over a woman's access to reproductive health care.
- Voters want their elected officials to focus on creating jobs, reforming education, or strengthening access to health care. Instead, too many politicians are obsessed with outlawing abortion and punishing women. These aren't the priorities of hardworking Americans.
- Politicians have no place telling women if, when, and how to raise families. We should trust women to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.



HARMFUL VS. HELPFUL LANGUAGE



HARMFUL

**Partial-birth
abortion**



HELPFUL

**Abortion later
in pregnancy**

- We can have an honest conversation about whether abortion should be safe and legal in this country, but you should not come at it dishonestly.
- Doctors are the best people to rely on for scientific evidence, not politicians whose aim is to outlaw abortion.
- Doctors agree that viability is not a number. They must evaluate each individual pregnancy to determine the right care for each woman. Some pregnancies will never be viable. It is important that pregnancy decisions remain left to women in consultation with their health care providers, not politicians.
- Nearly 99 percent of abortions occur before 21 weeks, but when they are needed later in pregnancy, it's often under very complex circumstances—the kind of situations where a woman and her doctor need every medical option available.⁴

⁴ https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/ss/ss6624a1.htm?s_cid=ss6624a1_w

- Abortions later in pregnancy often involve rare, severe fetal anomalies and serious risks to the woman’s health.



HARMFUL

There should be no taxpayer funding of abortion



HELPFUL

Lift abortion coverage bans

- Medicaid covers the cost of childbirth, but Congress currently bans it from covering abortion except in the dire circumstances of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in jeopardy.
- However we feel about abortion, we shouldn’t be allowed to deny a woman health coverage just because she’s poor.



HARMFUL

Chemical abortion



HELPFUL

Medication abortion

- Medication abortion—also called the abortion pill—is a safe and effective way to end an early pregnancy.
- The type of abortion you choose depends on your personal preference and situation. Some people prefer medication abortion because it does not require a procedure in a doctor’s office. You can have your medication abortion at home or in another comfortable place you choose.

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You get to decide whom you want to be with during your abortion, or you can go it alone. Because medication abortion is similar to a miscarriage, many people feel it’s more “natural” and less invasive.

- Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures performed in the United States. Data, including from the CDC, shows that abortion has a safety record of over 99 percent, with studies showing women experience major complications less than 1 percent of the time.⁵



HARMFUL

Personhood



HELPFUL

Outlawing abortion and birth control

- The issue of when life begins is personal. For some, it is based on faith, and for others, it is based on science. But what we do know is that politicians aren’t the experts—and it’s not an issue the American people want to be legislated.
 - That’s why it’s so important for women to be able to make their own decisions about whether and when they become parents. Politicians should not be able to make those decisions for them.

⁵ https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/6014/2194/2001/Protect_Safe_and_Legal_Abortion.pdf



HARMFUL

Crisis pregnancy centers/ pregnancy resource centers

- So-called “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs) are fake health care clinics that lie to, shame, and intentionally mislead women about their reproductive health-care options to block them from accessing abortion care.
- A woman facing an unintended pregnancy deserves medically accurate, comprehensive, and unbiased information.
- Women who enter crisis pregnancy centers are walking into a trap. There is no excuse for taxpayer dollars going to organizations whose goal is to mislead and mistreat women facing unintended pregnancy.



HELPFUL

Fake clinic/ so-called “crisis pregnancy centers”



USEFUL STATISTICS



- Seven in 10 Americans believe abortion should remain legal.⁶
 - Six in 10 women who seek abortion are already mothers trying to take care of the families they have.⁷
- One in 4 U.S. women will have an abortion by the age of 45.⁸
 - One in 5 women in the country have used Planned Parenthood at some point in their lives.
 - Planned Parenthood has strong support: A recent poll⁹ showed 80 percent of Americans—including 67 percent of Republicans—support Planned Parenthood and do not want to see “defunding” attacks.
 - More than half of Trump voters support funding for Planned Parenthood, according to a recent PerryUndem poll.¹⁰

- A majority of voters support lifting the Hyde Amendment.¹¹
 - Women who want abortion care but are denied are more likely to fall into poverty than those who can access abortion care.
 - Restricting Medicaid coverage of abortion forces 1 in 4 poor women to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.¹²

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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“Defunding”/federal: “Defunding” is a misnomer; this type of legislation blocks patients who are enrolled in public health care programs, such as Medicaid and Title X, from getting their care at Planned Parenthood health centers.

Abortion: A safe, legal procedure to end a pregnancy. There are two kinds: medication abortion, also known as the abortion pill, and in-clinic abortion. Both kinds of abortion are safe and effective. The right to seek an abortion is a constitutionally protected right for women.

Emergency contraception: A safe way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, either by getting a ParaGard IUD or taking an emergency contraceptive pill within 120 hours (five days) after having unprotected sex.

Medication abortion: Medication abortion, also known as the abortion pill, is done by taking medicines provided by a trained doctor or nurse that cause your pregnancy to end and your uterus to expel the pregnancy.

⁶ <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/naral-7in10.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2016/07/abortion-lives-women-struggling-financially-why-insurance-coverage-matters>

⁸ <https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2017/abortion-common-experience-us-women-despite-dramatic-declines-rates>

⁹ <https://poll.qu.edu/national/release-detail?ReleaseID=2470>

¹⁰ <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/blog/poll-57-of-trump-voters-oppose-defunding-planned-parenthood>

¹¹ <http://allaboveall.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Polling-Memo.pdf>

¹² <https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2009/restricting-medicare-funding-abortion-forces-one-four-poor-women-carry-unwanted>

Birth control: A way to prevent pregnancy. There are several methods of birth control such as: birth control implant, birth control patch, birth control pill, birth control shot, birth control sponge, birth control vaginal ring, cervical cap, diaphragm, condom, FC2 female condom, fertility awareness method (FAMs), intrauterine device or IUD (hormonal, copper), Spermicide, men’s sterilization (vasectomy), and sterilization (essure, tubal ligation).

Hyde Amendment: Since 1976, the Hyde Amendment has blocked federal Medicaid funding for abortion services. Since 1994, there have been three extremely narrow exceptions: when continuing the pregnancy will endanger the woman’s life, or when the pregnancy results from rape or incest.

Federally Qualified Health Centers/ community health centers: Community health centers (CHCs) are private, nonprofit organizations that directly or indirectly (through contracts and cooperative agreements) provide primary health services and related services to residents of a defined geographic area that is medically underserved (Source: Johns Hopkins University)¹³

Title X: America’s family planning program that more than 4 million Americans rely on for affordable family planning services. This program offers preventive health care services to those most in need. This is the only way that millions of women who have low incomes or are uninsured have access to birth control, cancer screenings, STD tests, and other basic care.

Hobby Lobby Supreme Court decision: On June 30, 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed certain bosses to block their employees’ access to birth control. The decision applied to more than half of all U.S. workers—that’s the tens of millions of workers at companies that are more than 50 percent owned by five or fewer people.

Roe v. Wade: On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, which recognized that the constitutional right to privacy extends to a woman’s right to make her own personal medical decisions—including the decision to have an abortion—without interference from politicians. The court held that a woman has the right to choose abortion care until fetal viability.

¹³ <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-primary-care-policy-center/definitions.html>

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