



the voice for choice

Fall 2007

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Works to Promote Comprehensive Health Education in Massachusetts

Applauds Governor Deval Patrick for Vetoing Abstinence-Only Funds

This summer, Governor Deval Patrick rejected abstinence-only-until-marriage programming in Massachusetts by vetoing the programs' funding from the FY 2008 budget. With recent federal regulation changes, there is no longer any appropriate way to use abstinence-only-until-marriage funding. Massachusetts will now join eleven other states in saying no to these dangerously misleading programs.

A recent federal study commissioned by the United States Congress found that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have been completely ineffective and have had no impact on rates of teen sexual activity. Some studies have shown that such programs can actually *increase* risks of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections by discouraging contraceptive use. A comprehensive approach to

health education will ensure that students are provided with the information they need to keep themselves healthy.



Governor Deval Patrick shows his support for comprehensive health education.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is working to improve health education in Massachusetts using a two-pronged approach. On the state level, we are working to pass *An Act to Provide Health Education in*

Schools (the Health Education Bill), which would make comprehensive health education part of the core curriculum for Massachusetts public schools. We are also working in communities that either do

not have comprehensive health education or that are planning to continue to use abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that are funded by other sources.

We're currently working with parents and students in Somerville and Waltham to improve health education in their middle schools. During the summer, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts outreach interns collected petition signatures from residents of these communities and throughout the state, which are being delivered to legislators to demonstrate support on this issue.

In both communities, we are building teams of parents and volunteers so that we will have strong groups prepared to take action when the time is right. If you would like to join the Somerville or Waltham campaign or can refer us to parents or students who might be interested, please contact Heather at 617-556-8800 x13.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Says Goodbye to Longtime Executive Director Melissa Kogut

In early August, Melissa Kogut left NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts after 11 years as Executive Director and more than 20 years working in the reproductive rights movement.

During her 11-year tenure as Executive Director, Melissa Kogut made an impact on the lives of thousands of women and families in the Commonwealth by protecting and improving access to reproductive health services, including abortion.

Under Melissa's

leadership, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts worked to pass important pieces of pro-choice legislation, including the Emergency Contraception Bill (2005), the Contraceptives Coverage Bill (2002), and the Buffer Zone Bill (2000). She also oversaw the organization's electoral strategy, which resulted in the election of a pro-choice House of Representatives in 2004 for the first time in state history.

Melissa's friends and colleagues gathered

on September 24 in downtown Boston to celebrate her work to protect reproductive choice in Massachusetts.

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Pro-choice legislators gathered to honor Melissa Kogut's commitment to choice. Front row (l to r): **Sen. Resor, Rep. Balsler, Rep. Wolf, Rep. Festa**; Back row (l to r): **Rep. Brownsberger, Rep. Peake, Rep. O'Day**.



Melissa Kogut speaks to her friends and colleagues at the September 24 reception in her honor.

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Our mission is to develop and sustain a grassroots constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing safe, legal, accessible abortion.

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From the Chair of the Board of Directors

Dear Members and Supporters,

I want to take a moment to update you on the current work of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts. We are working hard this fall to pass our priority pieces of legislation. You'll find more information about these bills throughout *The Voice for Choice*, but here is a quick summary:

An Act Relative to Public Safety (the Buffer Zone Bill) would establish a fixed "buffer zone" of 35 feet around the entrances and driveways of reproductive health facilities in Massachusetts.

An Act to Provide Health Education in Schools (the Health Education Bill) would make comprehensive health education part of the core curriculum for Massachusetts public schools.

An Act Relative to Public Health (the Repeal Bill) would repeal unconstitutional and unenforceable restrictions on abortion and contraception in Massachusetts, including a contraceptive restriction to married couples.

Our political director, volunteer lobbyists, and activists around the state are in contact with legislators on Beacon Hill in support of these bills. If you haven't already done so, please call your state representative and state senator today and ask them to support these bills!

Sincerely,

Happy Green
Chair, Board of Directors

The Choice Leadership Circle

We are grateful to the following donors for their generous gifts of \$1,000 or more to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts or the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation since 2005.

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Parents and Students Gather to Discuss Health Education

First Parent-Student Roundtable a Big Success!

On the evening of October 4, the first Parent-Student Roundtable convened in the offices of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts. A group of parents and students representing public school districts from around the state gathered to discuss their experiences with sex education.



Organizer **Heather Geldhof** and Political Director **Kelly O'Bryan** update the group.

Organizer Heather Geldhof and Political Director Kelly O'Bryan spoke about NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts' Health Education Campaign and the ways in which parents can become more involved through community and political action to ensure quality sex education in our schools. Rebecca Foley of the CARE For Youth Coalition also spoke about comprehensive health education. NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is a member of CARE For Youth, which is a coalition of more than 100 organizations that are working together to pass *An Act to Provide Health Education in Schools* (the Health Edu-

cation Bill).

A student, Kristen Rosa, also made a special presentation to the group about her positive experience having comprehensive health education throughout middle and high school.

This led the group into an hour-long discussion about their own experiences. Various perspectives were represented, as folks from Arlington, Boston, Newton, Somerville, Waltham, and Wellesley participated.

Lastly, the group discussed their plans for community action, including contacting their school's principal or superinten-



Parents and students from around the state gathered to discuss health education in their communities.

dent, writing a letter-to-the-editor for their local newspaper, and hosting a house party to spread the word.

If you would like to get involved in the campaign or attend the next Parent-Student Roundtable meeting, please contact Heather at 617-556-8800 x13.

Pro-Choice Campus Activism

This year, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is working with four campus organizers across the state to communicate with students about improving access to emergency contraception, preventing sexually transmitted infections, and becoming politically active.

Two organizers from last year representing Hampshire College and Wellesley College are back, and we are pleased to welcome two new students from Bard College at Simon's Rock and Smith College.

The NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts staff also welcomed five new in-office interns this year from Boston University, Brandeis University, and Lesley College.

If you or someone you know would like to begin a campus organizing campaign, please contact Heather at 617-556-8800 x13.

Upcoming Events Around the State...

Stand Up For Choice

Sunday, October 28, 2007
3:00 – 5:00 pm

Ardeo Grille at Kings Way
Yarmouth Port, MA

Tickets are \$25 and
sponsorships start at \$75

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is proud to welcome Nancy Keenan, President of NARAL Pro-Choice America, to our annual Stand Up For Choice event on Cape Cod.

Champions for Choice

Tuesday, November 13, 2007
6:00 – 8:30 pm

The Club at Veronique
Brookline, MA

Tickets are \$150 and
sponsorships start at \$250

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is pleased to honor Dr. Lolly Delli-Bovi and Kathryn R. Burton at our annual Champions for Choice event.

In Choice Company

Wednesday, December 12, 2007
6:30 – 8:30 pm

Location TBA
Boston, MA

The event is free and includes
appetizers and a cash bar.

Join NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts at *In Choice Company* to discuss issues surrounding sexual health and the launch of AIDS Action's new sexual health hotline.

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Educates Supporters Around the Commonwealth

CHOCOLATE MADNESS

On April 24, 2007, over 800 pro-choice chocolate lovers gathered to sample chocolate delights prepared and donated by 34 of Boston's finest restaurants and pastry chefs. Thank you to all the restaurants and dedicated volunteers who made the event possible! Photos © 2007 Megpix Photography.



AN EVENING WITH DR. KENNETH EDELIN

On June 4, 2007, Dr. Ken Edelin spoke to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts supporters about the impact of the Federal Abortion Ban on women's health and lives and what we can do in response. Dr. Edelin is emeritus professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Boston University and a longtime leader in the reproductive rights movement.



Dr. Kenneth Edelin (right) alongside former NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Executive Director **Melissa Kogut** (left).

IN CHOICE COMPANY

In Choice Company, an event series of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, brings together young people to socialize and discuss reproductive rights. Past events have taken place in Boston, Brighton, Cambridge, and Worcester.



In April 2007, Lynda Tocci, a long-time political strategist in Massachusetts, discussed how reproductive rights will play a role in the 2008 presidential election at the Tonic Bar in Brighton.



In July 2007, Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH and ACLU staff attorney Sarah Wunsch discussed the impact of the Federal Abortion Ban in Massachusetts at the Bell in Hand in downtown Boston.



In September 2007, Trina Jackson of the Boston Women of Color Coalition for Reproductive Justice discussed the intersection of social justice and reproductive rights at Clery's in Boston's South End.

“Melissa” continued

Former Executive Director Pam Nourse and Political Committee Chair Nicole Roos both described Melissa’s passion for reproductive rights and the organization. Pro-choice legislators spoke about Melissa’s effectiveness as a lobbyist and presented her with official legislative citations.

The Board of Directors has launched a national search to fill the position and has appointed longtime staff member Stacie Garnett as Deputy Director for Programs in the meantime. Over the coming months, the organization will continue its critical work to ensure access to reproductive health services in light of the changed legal landscape resulting from the April 18 Supreme Court decision upholding the Federal Abortion Ban.



Political Committee Chair **Nicole Roos** (left) presents **Melissa Kogut** (right) with a scrapbook.

The Board has also created the Melissa R. Kogut Political Action Fund, which will support our critical political, legislative, and educational programs. The Fund will allow the organization to build on Melissa’s successes here in the Commonwealth, while ensuring that NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is ready for its next Executive Director. Donors to the Fund will receive special recognition in our printed materials throughout the fall. If you would like more information about the Fund, please contact Pem Brown at 617-556-8800 x14 or pem@prochoicemass.org.

Melissa now serves as Executive Director of the Chefs Collaborative, a national organization based in Boston whose mission is to promote local and sustainable food and agriculture. Her dedicated service to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and the reproductive rights movement will not be forgotten.

Putting a Spotlight on Diversity

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts seeks the input and meaningful participation of people from the diverse groups in our state

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts is working to promote greater diversity on an organization-wide level. This involves forming collaborations with organizations representing people of color, making programmatic changes to better reflect the needs of the diverse constituencies in our state, and inviting people of color to become more active in the organization at the volunteer, committee, staff, and Board levels. Some of our successes include:

1) Diversity Initiative Grant

We are proud to have been awarded a competitive \$10,000 grant in Spring 2007 from Third Sector New England’s Diversity Initiative. This money will help fund some of our diversity work.

2) SisterSong Conference on Reproductive Justice in Chicago

In June, Stacie Garnett, Deputy Director for Programs, attended a four-day conference to learn about the specific reproductive health care concerns of women and men of color. Many workshops focused on the intersection of reproductive rights with race, class, gender, and other social justice issues.

3) In Choice Company Event on Reproductive Justice in Boston

On September 26, over 50 people came to hear Trina Jackson of the Boston Women of Color Coalition for Reproductive Justice talk about her experiences and the need for women of color to discuss their own reproductive health needs in the context of all the issues affecting their lives.

4) Disparities Action Network Lobby Day at the State House

On October 3, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts joined over 250 people and 40 organizations seeking to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities at a lobby day at the State House. Governor Patrick also attended to lend his support. Women of color have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and maternal mortality than white women. Furthermore, women of color often have more limited access to family planning services. We are seeking to pass legislation to address the unequal health risks, access to care, and quality of treatment affecting people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The Melissa R. Kogut Political Action Fund

The Melissa R. Kogut Political Action Fund has been established to honor Melissa’s nineteen years of dedicated service to NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts. Melissa Kogut made an impact on the lives of thousands of women and families in the Commonwealth by protecting and improving access to reproductive health services, including abortion. The money raised will strengthen the organization’s critical political, legislative, and educational programs and allow us to build on Melissa’s successes here in the Commonwealth.

Thank you to the following donors who have made gifts in honor of Melissa Kogut.

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Visit us online at
www.ProChoiceMass.org
News. Events. Politics.

2007 Lobby Day for Women's Health and Safety!

Join NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and coalition partners to ask your legislators to support important initiatives for women's health and safety, such as the **Buffer Zone Bill**, the **Health Education Bill**, and the **Repeal Bill**.

You will hear from exciting speakers, including Attorney General **Martha Coakley**, Speaker of the House **Salvatore DiMasi**, and Senate President **Therese Murray**!



When: Tuesday, October 30 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Where: Great Hall of the Massachusetts State House

Why: We need your help to protect women's health and safety in Massachusetts!

To RSVP: Call 617-556-8800 x16 or email cln@prochoicemass.org

**Learn more about our work inside this newsletter
and online at www.prochoicemass.org!**