



NARAL
Pro-Choice Minnesota

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Pro-Choice Minnesota News

A publication of NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota and NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota Foundation

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Like many of you, I have been asking myself, what just happened?

On Saturday, November 7, the U.S. House voted for the stunning last-minute anti-choice Stupak-Pitts amendment to the health-reform bill. This amendment means women who currently have insurance coverage for abortion services could lose this coverage in the new system.

The effect of the Stupak-Pitts Amendment, stripping women of their reproductive rights, is inconsistent with the core principles of health reform—which includes a commitment to making sure no person loses coverage for health services she currently has.

How did this happen? It's simple: Despite our pro-choice gains in the last two election cycles, anti-choice members of Congress still outnumber our pro-choice allies. The November vote is a stark reminder of that reality. Nonetheless, it is outrageous and deeply disappointing.

At NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota, we're united in the ultimate goal that women will not lose ground in the new health care system. In November following the Stupak-Pitts vote, we were honored to host an event with Sen. Al Franken, and to hear that we have allies working with us to ensure that the Senate does not repeat the mistakes the House made.

On Wednesday, December 2, 2009, NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota, with its Minnesota Choice Coalition partners, held a rally to fight the abortion coverage ban. This rally of over 100 pro-choice activists from across Minnesota, was held in conjunction with a National Day of Action in Washington, D.C., and served as a call to action to not sacrifice women's reproductive rights for the sake of health care reform.



Linnea House, Executive Director; Krista Twesme, Board Chair; and Senator Al Franken

We will be organizing and fighting - and we need your help.

In addition to fighting for our reproductive rights at the

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Federal level, NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota is working hard for your rights here every day. For us, abortion rights are primary: we have been and will continue to be an unwavering advocate for a woman's right to choose. We do not shy away from the controversy of abortion, either at the Capitol, in communities across the state, or on college campuses.

We have literally taken our message to the streets, with a field canvass operation that is the strongest community organizing force in the State. We believe that abortion rights must be organized by engaging one person at a time. Our organizing impacts attitudes and those attitudes impact elections and legislation.

NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota is a political organization. We have more than 20,000 active members like all of you across the state, and have organized more than 80,000 to support abortion rights. We are the political leader of the pro-choice movement.

But we cannot do this alone: movements, public policy debates, and elections are not free. We need your financial support to keep our movement strong to continue to fight the good fight.

We are at a critical time: a moment in which we could lose an entire generation's work. You will read in this newsletter about the critical work we are doing to fight that tide. In order for us to do so, we all need to step up and become a pro-choice leader.

I personally ask that you do so in the memory of a history we cannot change and a future that can only be changed by speaking the truth about women's lives and by trusting women.

Thank you.

Linnea House

A LOOK BACK AT OUR 10 YEARS AT THE MINNESOTA WOMEN'S BUILDING...

After a decade in the Minnesota Women's Building, NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota is merging our two offices into one new location. We currently have an office near the Capitol and a satellite office for our field and phone canvass operations.



This merger will allow the organization to streamline our activities and costs, and build a stronger future for our upcoming battles. Our new office will be located near Highway 280 and University Avenue in St. Paul, at 2300 Myrtle Avenue. We'll have an open house at the end of January, and we hope to see you there!

When Minnesota NARAL moved into their new offices in 1999, the organization had a staff of four and a cadre of interns and volunteers. We faced an uphill battle at the Capitol. We had a new governor in office, Jesse Ventura, and an anti-choice majority in both the Senate and House.

Since that time, we've seen some changes in the political landscape, and we continue to fight our constant battles as well as grow to meet the new ones. In 2004, the organization changed its name to NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota and launched a field canvass program, designed to organize and educate Minnesotans about the current threats to a woman's right to choose. The field canvass program has dramatically changed the face of the organization and increased our membership and political power.

As we enter into 2010 and a new chapter of our organization's life, we thank you for your support as we've journeyed together in our fight for abortion rights.

On the next page are some highlights from the past decade (*And special thanks to Rachel Stein, from Lawrence University, for her help with this project.*):

1999

Our first Grassroots Organizer is hired. Student organizing program expands.



2001

Help develop a clinic escort program at Midwest Health Center for Women Clinic after seeing a niche for both volunteers and patient protection from protestors.

Student organizing programs expands to include Mankato State, Carleton College, St. Thomas University, Macalester College, Augsburg College, and University of Minnesota Duluth.

2003

24-Hour Waiting period bill passed, attached to a circus bill. Signed into law by new governor, Tim Pawlenty.



NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota

2000

George W. Bush elected President.

With foundation funding, begin work in rural communities upon hiring a new field director.

St. Olaf College hosts a lecture given by Sarah Weddington on Roe v. Wade.

2002

Campus program expands to 11 colleges, and onto smaller, more rural communities.



2004

NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota founder, Betty Benjamin, passes away.

March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C.

Launch pilot program of field canvass operation.

Re-election of George W. Bush as President.

2005

Positive Alternatives Act passed into law- state now funds Crisis Pregnancy Centers.

Organizers from National NARAL come to see Campus Program and use Minnesota format as a model for other states.

Escort program begins at the Hanson clinic in Minneapolis.

2007

Passage of EC in the ER bill- the first proactive pro-choice victory in over a decade!



2009

Campus program maintained at 16 campuses.

Escort program continues every Saturday morning at the Hanson Clinic.

The murder of Dr. George Tiller on May 31, 2009.

The Health Care Reform debate could dramatically impact women's access to reproductive health care.



2006

Pro-Choice Elections Victory! Elections Matter- no longer an anti-choice majority in House.



2008

Election of Barak Obama as president.

In-house phone canvass program launched. Expanded pro-choice field canvassing programs in three other state affiliates- North Carolina, Washington, and New York.



RALLY TO STOP ABORTION BAN COVERAGE

Anti-choice lawmakers are using health-care reform to attack a woman's right to choose, and if they are successful, the result could be one of worst restrictions on a woman's right to choose in a generation.



In response, the Minnesota Choice Coalition and NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota organized a day of action, to oppose the Stupak-Pitts amendment passed by the House in November.

On Wednesday, December 2nd, the pro-choice community rallied in solidarity with our sisters and brothers across the nation to say NO to abortion coverage bans. With 100 activists, we stood united in the goal that women do not lose ground in the new health care system. As the health care debate moves in the Senate, pro-choice advocates are vowing to mobilize their supporters to keep anti-choice amendments out of the Senate bill.

At the rally, Linnea House, Executive Director, said "We are at a critical time in our history: we are at a moment in time when we could lose an entire generation's work for reproductive rights. We know that there are U.S. Senators right now that are planning to introduce similar amendments in the Senate. That is why I ask all of you here today to talk with your Senators TODAY to make sure they hear our message."

We urge all Minnesotans to call your senators today at (202) 224-3121 and tell them to oppose the abortion-coverage ban!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Roe v. Wade Anniversary- Thursday, January 21st- location to be determined**
- **Volunteer/Member Open House- Wednesday, January 27th-Come check out our new office and learn how to caucus for abortion rights at your precinct caucus.**
- **Precinct Caucus, Tuesday, February 2nd, 2010- in your neighborhood!**

Follow us online!

Want to keep up to date on the latest news affecting women's reproductive rights?

In addition to our website, www.ProChoiceMinnesota.org, you can become our Fan at our Facebook page, follow our pro-choice tweets on Twitter, or read our up-to-date blog. You can find all three through our website- or go directly here:

Twitter:

[ProChoiceMN](https://twitter.com/ProChoiceMN)

Blog:

www.minnesotablogforchoice.blogspot.com

Facebook:

facebook.com/NARAL-ProChoiceMinnesota

Hope to see you soon!

Thank You

This month, NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota will say good-bye to two of our long time board members, Barbara Elliott and Sarah Woolever. Both women have contributed enormously to the success of the organization, especially coordinating our successful Comedy for Choice Event.

We will also say good-bye to Foundation board member, Amy Brugh. During her tenure, Amy served as vice chair and chair of the board, and worked diligently to position the Foundation as a successful organization. Her passion, organizational talents, and good humor will be missed.

Thank you all for your commitment to the success of our organization!

Welcome

While we are sad to say good-bye, we are pleased to add new board members to our board of directors.

In July, NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota welcomed three new members: Catherine Kelly, Erica Proser and Richard Schwartz, and in November, Maggie Hobbs joined our team. We are excited to have new talents, connections, and ideas on our team, and look forward to building a stronger future together.