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**The Top Ten Cheers and Jeers of the Year
from BirthControlWatch.org**
Birth Control Reemerges as a Hot Political Issue in 2007



BirthControlWatch.org, a Web site that monitors the policies, statements, events and politics of access to birth control and comprehensive sex education, today released its first-ever *Cheers and Jeers of the Year*, a list of the top ten stories of 2007 on the politics and policies of birth control.

"For people to be able to make their own important life decisions, they need access to information, options and services," said Cristina Page, the blogger and voice of BirthControlWatch.org. "This includes birth control and comprehensive sex education. Yet here we are, 43 years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Griswold v. Connecticut* paved the way for birth control in this country, and we are going backwards."

"This year, our top five jeers include politicians who fund abstinence-only programs and pharmacists who refuse to fill out birth control prescriptions. It's not all bad news, however," she added. "Our top five cheers include governors who have refused to take abstinence-only money; researchers who have followed the data; Members of Congress who voted for the third-largest increase in Title X's history; and voters who in [poll](#) after [poll](#) continue to support birth control and comprehensive sex education."

BirthControlWatch.org Cheers and Jeers of the Year



1. Jeer: The Cost of Birth Control on College Campuses Skyrocketed

When Bush signed the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, few knew it would scale back access to contraception for the group of people who need it most: college-age women. But that's just what it did. It eliminated incentives for pharmaceutical companies to offer contraception at a discount to college health centers. In 2007, those centers ran out of their reduced-rate stock and were forced to increase prices to cover the new inflated costs. For many college women, birth control prices went up 900 percent – from \$5 to \$50. Since college women already have the country's highest rate of unintended pregnancies, making contraception less affordable for them was a plan for disaster.



2. Cheer: Governors Said No to Abstinence-Only Money

In 2007, Colorado and New York joined the movement to reject federal funding for school programs that teach abstinence as the only sure way to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and provide inaccurate information about birth control. With the addition of these two important states, a total of 14 states have now rejected efforts by the federal government to promote inaccurate, ideology-based and ineffective abstinence-only programs. As a result, more than a third of the funds available under this federal program are going unclaimed or unused. The 14 states are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.



3. Jeer: Congress Abandoned an Effort to Repeal the Global Gag Rule

The Senate voted early in the year to repeal the so-called Global Gag Rule, the Bush administration policy barring U.S. aid to any overseas group that provides abortions, counsels about them or advocates liberalized abortion laws. The House later voted to allow at least donated contraceptives to go to such groups, while leaving the policy in place. But President Bush threatened to veto any measure that contained language weakening the gag rule. When the gag rule language became entangled with the huge omnibus spending bill that funded the entire government at the end of the year, its fate was sealed. Both House and Senate negotiators surrendered it rather than calling Bush's bluff, so the gag rule survives into 2008..



4. Cheer: Bush's Former Surgeon General Defected from the War on Sex

Former Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona revealed that the Bush administration routinely blocked him from speaking about or issuing reports on abstinence-only sex education and emergency contraception when he served as surgeon general from 2002 to 2006. "Anything that doesn't fit into the political appointees' ideological, theological or political agenda is often ignored, marginalized or simply buried," Carmona said at a hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. "The problem with this approach is that in public health, as in a democracy, there is nothing worse than ignoring science or marginalizing the voice of science for reasons driven by changing political winds."



5. Jeer: Anti-Contraception Extremists Were Appointed to the Top Federal Contraception Post

In 2006, President Bush chose Dr. Eric Keroack to direct Title X, the nation's contraception program for the poor, despite Keroack's stated belief that "the crass commercialization and distribution of birth control is demeaning to women, degrading of human sexuality and adverse to human health and happiness." In March, Dr. Keroack resigned under suspicion of Medicaid fraud in his private practice in Massachusetts. In 2007, Bush chose as Keroack's replacement Dr. Susan Orr, who told the *Weekly Standard* that any effort to get health insurers to pay for birth control is "about making everyone collaborators with the culture of death."



6. Cheer: Title X Finally Got a Funding Increase

After years of flat-funding, Title X, the federal program to provide family planning services to low-income people, finally got a slight budget increase. The \$17 million dollar bump was the third largest increase in 25 years, and it is needed now more than ever. Had Title X funding just kept pace with medical cost inflation since 1980, it would now be getting more than \$725 million per year, more than double the proposed fiscal 2008 level of \$300 million. Even though strapped for resources, it is estimated that clinics with Title X support prevented almost 20 million unintended pregnancies, nine million of which would have ended in abortion. Imagine the results if the program were funded to meet the need.



7. Jeer: Washington State Pharmacists Got Permission to Reject Prescriptions for Emergency Birth Control

In November, a federal judge appointed by President Bush suspended Washington state's requirement that pharmacists fill prescriptions for emergency contraception. The District Court's ruling, known as "refuse and refer," allows a pharmacist to reject a woman's prescription as long as he or she refers the woman to another pharmacy. Emergency contraception is only effective if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, and it gets less effective during every hour of those 72 hours. This ruling allows pharmacists to give women the runaround, minimizing the drug's effectiveness and making pregnancy more likely. The decision is being appealed.



8. Cheer: A Definitive Study of Abstinence-Only Programs Confirmed Again that They Don't Work

A long-awaited national study by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. concluded that abstinence-only sex education, a cornerstone of the Bush administration's social agenda, does not keep teenagers from having sex. Neither does it increase or decrease the likelihood that if they do have sex they will use a condom. Authorized by Congress in 1997, The report, *Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs: Final Report*, followed 2,000 children from elementary or middle school into high school. "After 10 years and \$1.5 billion in public funds, these failed abstinence-only-until-marriage programs will go down as an ideological boondoggle of historic proportions," said James Wagoner, President of Advocates for Youth.



9. Jeer: “W” Stands for Wrong: For the Sixth Consecutive Year, President Bush Turned His Back on the Women of the World

The U.S. Congress passed a 2007 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that included \$34 million for UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. The money would have meant vital assistance to end fistula, improve maternal health worldwide, prevent HIV/AIDS, and provide family planning and other essential programs to the poorest people on earth. However for the sixth consecutive year President Bush refused to release the funding.



10. Cheer: Countries with the Sharpest Declines in Abortion Rates Were Found to be Those Where Contraception Use Has Increased Dramatically

According to [a worldwide study](#) reported by the Guttmacher Institute and the World Health Organization (WHO) in *The Lancet* in October, abortion rates fell most significantly in countries where contraception is widely available. The world's lowest abortion rate in 2003 was in Western Europe, where contraceptive services and use are widespread and safe abortion is easily accessible.

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BirthControlWatch.org launched on June 7, 2007, the 42nd anniversary of Griswold v. Connecticut, the landmark Supreme Court decision that guaranteed the right to birth control. BirthControlWatch.org aims to mobilize constituents to break the political logjam that has prevented progress on a comprehensive reproductive health policy in the United States.