

Thank you Lee. I'm honored to be here at this historic bastion of free speech in Cleveland. And thank you Jim for your hospitality and I want to thank the Warshovski family for sponsoring this luncheon today. Thank you. It's a tremendous honor to be here with you as the new President of Planned Parenthood and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

I was born and raised in Dallas Texas and raised in a political family, where every social justice movement that came through town my folks were into. Whether the farm workers or women's movement or the civil rights movement, I thought we were just like other families, well in a way we were, but other families were bowling and we were doing politics. Our dinner table wasn't where we ate, it's where you sorted precinct lists for the next day and we eventually moved to Austin Texas which was a more hospitable environment for my very liberal parents. But there, I got to work on my very first political campaign for a young woman lawyer who wanted to be in the state legislature, and this is way before woman served in office anywhere, but my Mom ran her campaign. As kids we got to do all those fun things, learn all of those political skills like stuffing envelopes and handing out bumper stickers, and putting up yard signs and taking down your opponent's yards signs. But despite very long odds she won that race and her name was Sara Weddington. I'm grateful to Sara. I know she's been a previous speaker here and she is a Texan who is much cherished with love.

That was sort of my upbringing that leads me to what I think we are here to talk about today, which is politics, and in particular, why, as the nation's leading and most respected women's health care provider, Planned Parenthood, is increasingly involved through our action funds and political activity. The fact is, we have to be because we simply can't serve the 5 million women, men and teens who come to us every year for education and services unless we're out there advocating on their behalf. And this part of our mission, frankly has never been more important, and one important event that happened last April which is the Gonzales vs. Planned Parenthood case in a 5/4 decision where the Supreme Court overturned more than 3 decades of protecting women's health. It was the very first time, since Sara argued and won the Roe case, that the Supreme Court has sanctioned politicians practicing medicine basically ignoring the testimony of doctors, the opinions of American Conference of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and essentially ruling that women with problem pregnancies, who's health is at risk, including their ability to possibly have a future healthy pregnancy will have their medical care now dictated by Congress, not by their own doctors. This decision represented a seismic shift in the way the Supreme Court approaches women's reproductive rights and showed in stark relief the difference that it's going to make on the court, to have the new justices, Roberts and Alito.

In "Her Vigorous Decent", which I recommend to your reading, Ruth Bader-Ginsberg wrote for the minority, this decision jeopardizes women's health and places doctors in an untenable position. And, if you followed this court, at the close of their session, Justice Breyer stated from the bench in a very unusual move, "It is not often the law that

so few have so quickly changed so much.” So, we have that Supreme Court, and so, in the time when the constitutional protections for women are quite literally hanging by one vote the mood of the country, I would argue, is changing definitely in the other direction because across the heartland, of America we are seeing common sense supporters of women’s health rights elected and re-elected in states across the country.

It was very interesting this year, some of you may go to the movies, I go religiously, but the Academy Awards this year the best picture of the year went to “The Departed” which I think is, actually, a pretty good description of what happened to some of the most heartened opponents of women’s rights in Congress, many of them from my own home state of Texas. But what’s really important is not just who left Congress but really who the leadership that took their place including your very own Senator, Sherrod Brown, a life-long champion of women’s health. I’ve heard, actually, that his most devoted volunteer in the Sherrod Brown campaign and the life-long dedicated champion of women’s rights is with us here today, his Mom, Emily Brown. So, thank you Emily for raising a great son, raising a wonderful son. And the great news is that Senator Brown is joined by 23 new pro-choice members of Congress who came to Congress and for me, nothing was sweeter than this last past January being able to take my daughter, Lily to the US Capital and watch my former boss, Nancy Pelosi, sworn in as the new Speaker of the House of Representatives. So, we’re seeing change in the country but I think the importance is looking beyond Congress.

Where you could really see what is happening, I would say, is looking at the heartland states where voters, who were offered a clear choice between candidates who supported women’s health and those who did not made their opinions known. And, there is no better example than here in the state of Ohio where the difference between Governor, Ted Strickland, and Secretary of State Blackwell, in the arena of women’s rights was as wide as the Grand Canyon. And, what a difference Governor Strickland has made. What a difference he has made, it’s incredible. Just recently, just to take one example, turning back Federal money for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs which Congress’ own study showed flat don’t work and instead redirecting money to be used for comprehensive and accurate sex education, which includes abstinence but teaches young people what they need to know to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. I mean, bravo to Governor Strickland.

So, but it’s interesting, if you look even beyond Ohio, in the most competitive governor’s races in the country in 2006, pro-women’s health governors were elected and re-elected; Governor Jennifer Granholm in Michigan, Governor Jim Doyle in Wisconsin, Kathleen Sebelius in Kansas, Governor Napolitano in Arizona, and the newly elected Governor, Chet Culver in Iowa. These are folks, these are governors, who are champions of women’s rights and pulled no punches about where they stood at election time and their making a difference, in fact, in all including Ohio the ten states have now told the Federal Government they won’t take abstinence only, because it isn’t doing a thing to protect our kids.

You may not know this, but the United States has the second highest teen pregnancy rate in the western industrialized world. If we don't do anything differently, 750,000 teenagers will get pregnant this coming year, and nearly 4 million will contract a sexually transmitted infection. It's a healthcare epidemic. It's a healthcare crisis. So I don't think it's a question of whether we should do better, we absolutely have to do better. You know, I have sixteen year old twins and if you don't think I appreciate Planned Parenthood in a whole new way, it's been life changing.

You know, as a mother, I really think... I feel like we've got to ask, how can we tell our kids they have to be responsible unless we're willing to take the responsibility providing them information and health care access that they need? It's not credible to them, and yet, this administration has ignored science, they've ignored medicine and abandoned responsibility for our young people, and if you read this week's report learned that we even prevented the nation's top doctor, our US Surgeon General, from speaking out on the need for better sex education. So, there is a lot to do and yet despite this administration's record on healthcare access,

I think Planned Parenthood continues to make strides and it's really important to recognize, this year the HPV vaccine was approved and is now provided by Planned Parenthood clinics across America preventing cervical cancer in young women. After a 40 month campaign, emergency contraception finally went over the counter, which has changed the lives of women in America, providing a really important birth control option. And we've also worked on modern pharmacies to make sure that they actually fill birth control prescriptions to women who come in and want their birth control filled. After complaints we've had from a lot of women going to Wal-Mart, we mobilized thousands of our grassroots supporters and this spring they signed an agreement with Planned Parenthood, agreeing to stock and fill prescriptions for any woman at any Wal-Mart without discrimination and without delay. So I'd say, that's a big victory.

And, I think a really important development, this is again, think about the political, what's going on in the heartland of the country through mobilizing our grassroots supporters and frankly going door-to-door talking to voters, Planned Parenthood and others kept the doors of the Planned Parenthood health centers open, and abortion safe and legal for the women in the State of South Dakota. And that was a really important victory. And what we heard in South Dakota was important, because you know, I come from Texas, I don't come from the East Coast. I know what it's like, but what we heard from folks in South Dakota is that when they hear what we're for, which is common sense and prevention, they're with us. You know, they lead the same lives as we do. They're for planned pregnancies and healthy teenagers and access to birth control.

You know, every year we provide healthcare and education to 5 million men, women, and teens, and in fact, 1 in 4 women in America have been to Planned Parenthood at some point in their life. We're in all 50 states, red states, blue states, it doesn't matter. When women come to us they're not making a political statement. They're just coming because they need reliable, affordable healthcare from a trusted provider. And the

facts are, yes we provide safe abortion care and I'm proud of it and, thank god we do. But, here's the thing I want you to know, that is 3% of what we do. 97% of what we do is basic prevention, basic preventative healthcare. Last year we provided 1.1 million women with cervical cancer screenings. We did 840,000 breast exams. We gave birth control out to 2.5 million women and teens. We did midlife services. We do prenatal care at many affiliates and the list goes on and on and on, and that's the truth.

Planned Parenthood represents the mainstream of America when it comes to healthcare and Americans support what we stand for; because, in the end, our mission at Planned Parenthood is simple. It's to create a world where women and couples can make the necessary choices to protect their health and enjoy healthy, successful and productive lives. So in 2006, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund created a wave of pro-choice victories throughout the country. Even the National Journal said we were on the list of the top five political organizations in America that mobilized their supporters and got them to the polls. And, here in Ohio, the story was the same. In 2006 the Planned Parenthood Ohio Action Fund had one of the largest volunteer programs in the state with over 700 grassroots activists knocking on doors about what was at stake, and getting young people to the polls to vote. And this is the work we are going to do in 2008; to put women and teens and healthcare back where it belongs, as part of the mainstream healthcare in America. And nowhere is it more important than here in Ohio. You all, I know are a proud state and you probably know that this state has voted for the winning president in all but two elections since 1892. So we are taking no chances. We are going to be busy here in Ohio and nationally. In the 2008 elections, Planned Parenthood is committed and will mobilize 1 million voters and activists on behalf of pro-choice candidates. But the point is I want to just bring this home to you. It's not just about elections and politics. It's really about fundamentally what are we going to do to change people's lives, because real lives are at stake.

And this is really brought home to me, the other day, I was in, I used to live in Washington. I was down there and visited the Ophelia Egypt Teen Clinic in Anticostia which is right over the river from Washington D.C. And I got to know a young man named Irwin Royster, who is one of the Planned Parenthood Community Educators. Irwin works in one of the poorest areas of Washington, in the Anticostia projects, and he is a resourceful guy. He's reclaimed an old, abandoned sporting goods store. Got 'em to give it to him for free and he filled it with some donated furniture and with barely two nickels to rub together, working 20 hour day, 7 days a week, Irwin and his team of community volunteers are working with high risk teens out of the projects. Giving them health services, education, and a safe place, frankly, for kids to come home after school if they don't have any other place to go. These are kids who follow him around like the Pied Piper, you know. He's just one of those guys, he's like a life boat in a sea of really, really tough living. And all of this, in the shadow of our nation's capital the highest HIV/Aids rate in America. And so I look at Irwin and what he's doing pulling this program together with bailing wire and duct tape and I think what he could do with just a drop of the more than 1 billion dollars we've wasted on abstinence only programs in this country. How many more teens could he be reaching?

That's what we are really talking about. And the truth is, there are Irwin Roysters in every Planned Parenthood community in this country. So, our commitment is to Irwin and the kids he serves. And I know he can't do his job unless I do my job and we do our job to change the politics of this country. You know, we all do what we do, I think, because our parents or our grandparents instilled in us some belief that we can needed to leave this place better than it was when we got here and I'm no exception. They gave us the tools and courage and optimism to believe that we could do it.

So just a for moment, taking some personal privilege, my own Mom grew up in Lakeview, Texas right outside a suburb of Waco... if you can imagine such a thing exists. And she married her high school sweetheart and they went to Baylor University which is a Baptist School where Mom said, you know everything was more fun 'cause it was either against the rules or it was a sin. And she was an unlikely candidate to become a feminist icon but there it is out of the hardest scrabble a feminist was born. But for all of her activism from protesting the Vietnam war to marching with the farm workers, nothing meant more to her than women's rights. And when Mom left us, she passed away this year, she was as unrepentant a feminist as any woman who ever lived you know. But, here's what I'd say to you. She had no patience with whining about the rotten state of affairs, she just believed you had to get out there and fight back. And one of my best memories still, I have many, the Planned Parenthood memory, marching in Washington, maybe with some of you at the March for Women's Lives and with three generations of Richard's women, my Mom, my daughters, me. And she gave one of her paint peeling speeches to the Texas delegation and we lit out to that march like a match on dry kindling. She lead us Texan's with her crown of white hair, this beacon, to any stragglers we might have left behind. And you know, most folks get more conservative as they age, but I swear, my Mom just got more radical. Or maybe just everything came a whole lot clearer. And the last interview Mom gave was actually about an article about Planned Parenthood gave in Vogue magazine. And she said something that to me sort of sums it all up about what she taught me and I think what she tried to teach others which is the answer to real life is yes. You only get this one chance. This is the only life you have so do it. No do-overs no regrets. And so what I would say to you is for Mom, for Irwin and his teens for the millions of women and men who depend on Planned Parenthood every day that's why we carry on. So thank you and God Bless.