

# SUNDAY FOCUS

## Women are victims in radical agenda

Today marks the 39th anniversary of the landmark 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*. The ruling recognized that women, in consultation with their families, their physicians, and their God (not politicians) should have the right to decide whether to continue a pregnancy to term or have a safe and legal abortion.

This key question — whether abortion should be safe and legal, or illegal and dangerous — receives ongoing media attention in our community and has been the topic of emotional and diverging moral views.

More than 60 percent of women who have legal and safe abortions are already mothers, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control using 2008 data. As such, they are uniquely capable and aware of the impact of their decisions.

Yet this past year, Texas politicians used their views on abortion as an excuse to cut funding to family planning programs by two-thirds. This eliminated breast and cervical cancer screenings, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, HIV testing, birth control and basic annual exams for nearly 300,000 low-income Texas women.

Federal funds, which are directed to the state health department, enabled clinics and hospitals — like Planned Parenthood of Central Texas — to provide free or low-cost checkups and birth control for low-income Texas women.

Planned Parenthood of Central Texas lost 50 percent of funding that provided free or very low-cost services to more than 6,000 women and men in our community in 2011. Last year in Waco, Planned Parenthood provided more than 20,000 medical visits to this community including:

- 7,373 breast and cervical cancer screenings
- 17,502 tests for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- 17,113 birth control visits
- 1,218 screening mammogram referrals
- 138 diagnostic mammogram referrals.

Prior to the cutbacks in women's health funding, family planning clinics had been reaching less than 20 percent of women in need. Sadly, that number will drop even further now that many clinics and hospitals throughout our state are eliminating or cutting many family planning programs. Some are only offering services one day a week.



FELICIA CHASE GOODMAN

Guest columnist

## ROE V. WADE

What happens when nearly 300,000 women no longer receive regular breast and cervical cancer screenings, or treatment for sexually transmitted infections, or long-term contraception to plan and space their next pregnancy? Will women be healthier and safer? Will they be better mothers?

No, this extreme agenda ensures that no one wins. When Texas women no longer receive these preventive services, an estimated 20,000 unplanned births are expected to occur. That could cost taxpayers \$231 million dollars. Some of these unintended pregnancies may result in abortions. In addition, thousands of women are expected to go without regular cervical cancer screenings which could help to save their lives.

State Rep. Wayne Christian, a Republican from Nacogdoches, was asked in September if there was a war on birth control. He answered: "Well, of course, this is a war on birth control and abortions and everything — that's what family planning is supposed to be about."

Whether abortions should be safe and legal is an emotional issue that all Texans have strong personal views about. But whether a politician's opposition to safe, legal abortion justifies shredding our health care system and denying low-income women standard services certainly deserves all of our attention.

One patient, Tena Price, told us her story recently in an email: "I was choosing between my health care and keeping food on the table. After skipping two years of mammograms and learning that taking hormones only every other month was really hurting my health, I called Planned Parenthood. They provided me with an annual exam, cholesterol testing (I couldn't afford my primary care doctor either), birth control for a year and an appointment for a mammogram. As someone who has always paid for my own health care (no insurance), I was overwhelmed with the kindness and generosity of the staff at Planned Parenthood. You have made a difference in my life. Thank you!"

Planned Parenthood is thankful to be here for Tena, and the thousands of women like her in Central Texas, as they seek affordable health care and as they make safe choices about their health and the health of their families in the years ahead.

**Felicia Chase Goodman is director of community affairs for Planned Parenthood of Central Texas.**