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**PLANNED PARENTHOOD CRITICIZES MIDNIGHT REGULATION FROM BUSH ADMINISTRATION**  
**New Health and Human Services Regulation Jeopardizes Women's Health**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a last-minute regulation yesterday, December 18, that poses a serious threat to patients' rights by placing barriers for women to access and learn more about birth control pills, emergency contraception and IUDs.

"This midnight regulation, issued in the last days of the Bush administration, undermines this country's fragile health care system as well as patients' access to health care information and services," said Alison Gee, Vice President of Public Policy at Planned Parenthood of Southwest Missouri. "With the current economic uncertainty in this country, this is no time to leave women out in the cold."

Because of ambiguous language and leaving terms like "abortion" undefined, health care workers can use the rule to deny access to most forms of birth control based on their own personal beliefs. Starting January 2009, pharmacists can now refuse to fill your birth control pills, emergency rooms can refuse to give emergency contraception to rape victims, and if a nurse or doctor is reluctant to discuss birth control options with their patient - they don't have to do it.

"From day one, the Bush administration has made ideology and politics a priority over patients' rights and needs, and this regulation is no different," said Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. "We look forward to working with President-elect Obama and leaders in Congress to repeal this disastrous rule and expand patients' access to full health care information and services — not limit it."

Roughly 200,000 U.S. citizens, federal and state elected officials, medical organizations, and health care advocacy and religious organizations submitted comments opposing the HHS regulation which broadens the scope of existing laws and reaches beyond congressional intent by focusing solely on providers, with absolutely no protections to ensure patients receive critical health care information and services.

Visit [plannedparenthood.org](http://plannedparenthood.org) for more resources on opposition to HHS midnight rule and [federalregister.gov](http://federalregister.gov) for the full and final regulation from HHS.

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Planned Parenthood is the region's leading sexual and reproductive health care advocate and provider. With more than 880 health centers nationwide, Planned Parenthood provides medical services and sexuality education for millions of women, men, and teenagers each year.