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# The Public Affairs Pulse

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Keeping You on Top of Legislative & Advocacy Issues

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## Birth Control Victory! Obama Stands Strong on No-cost Birth Control

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In the face of tremendous pressure from the Catholic Church to expand the birth control refusal clause — allowing employers to opt-out of providing vital preventive service to women under the new Affordable Care Act and Health and Human Services (HHS) guidelines — the Obama administration reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring women will have access to birth control coverage with no costly co-pays, no matter where they work! This validates what we've long known: that birth control is basic health care and fundamental to improving women's health and the health of their families.

But it's far from over — legislation is already moving through the U.S. House and Senate that threatens to completely take away access to birth control and severely undermine women's health. The Rubio-Manchin bill would allow any business or corporation to deny birth control coverage to their employees on the basis of personal religious belief or moral conviction.

Another bill, sponsored by Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO), would allow any employer or health plan to refuse to cover any health care service they object to on religious or moral grounds. And it's only just begun. It's bad health policy and bad politics. Women around the country understand what it means to get birth

control without co-pays or deductibles, and they won't let someone take that away without a fight. And neither will we!

## Huge Successes with Recent PPWNM Campaigns

In January, PPWNM celebrated its 4<sup>th</sup> annual MLK Service Project. This year's campaign was a resounding success! With eight health centers and 12 community partners collecting donations, we collected 2,439 items. Items included feminine hygiene products, bath and beauty supplies, children's clothing, toys, and food. These items were donated to nine domestic violence shelters and domestic violence prevention organizations, covering an area stretching from Grand Rapids to Marquette! Thank you to everyone who donated, hosted a donation site, or sorted and delivered items!

In February, we celebrated Condom Month with a host of fun events including two condom drop "flash mobs" and a pub crawl. This year's theme was "Get Safe, Get Some!" and featured condom kits containing three free condoms, "How to Use a Condom brochure", a "How to Talk to Your Partner About Condoms" card, and a Valentine promoting the benefits of condom use. All told, PPWNM staff and volunteers distributed 2,280 condom kits and 150 condom lollipops given away by JET members. That's 7,140 condoms handed out for Condom Month!

## Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities

Want to get involved? Check out these advocacy opportunities:

- ✓ **Get Out the Vote:** It seems early but we are gearing up for the 2012 election season by signing up volunteers interesting in getting out the vote. If elections excite you, this is your chance to shine.
- ✓ **Adopt-A-Legislator:** This new program is designed for politically minded individuals who want to build one-on-one relationships with their elected officials in order to educate them on important issues. These volunteers write letters, emails, make phone calls, and attend face-to-face meetings with their legislators.
- ✓ **JET (Justice Engagement Team):** If you are between the ages of 18 and 40 and you are interested in becoming more involved in the reproductive justice movement, learning about our issues in an in-depth way, and transitioning from volunteer to advocate, this is the group for you. Meetings of JET are held on the first Tuesday of the month.

For more information on these and other opportunities at PPWNM,

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