

# The Public Affairs Pulse

## Keeping You on Top of Legislative & Advocacy Issues

### DOMA and Prop 8 Struck Down

WASHINGTON — On Wednesday, June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), enacted in 1996, is unconstitutional.

DOMA denied federal benefits to same sex couples who married legally in states that allow same sex marriage. The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision ruled that DOMA is an unconstitutional violation of the Fifth Amendment.

The same day, the Supreme Court also declined to address Proposition 8, the California Law making same sex marriage illegal. Lower courts had ruled that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional and the Supreme Court allowed this decision to stand, effectively striking down Proposition 8.

These two decisions are huge victory for the LGBT community and equal rights in the U.S. Planned Parenthood applauds the Supreme Court's decision that paves the way for equal marital rights.

The federal government and state legislatures now have the task of changing current practices that comply with DOMA. Many states, including Michigan, have bans on same-sex marriage and the expectation is that these bans will be challenged with state court cases and ballot initiatives in the near future.

### HHS Final Rule on BC Benefit

WASHINGTON — The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced its final guidelines on the birth control benefit of the Affordable Care Act — making clear that everyone must have access to birth control at no cost, no matter where they work.

While birth control was made available as preventative health care with no co-pay and no cost-sharing under the Affordable Care Act, there has been ongoing debate regarding faith-affiliated organizations. The new HHS ruling states

that while churches and houses of worship remain exempt from the requirement to provide birth control to employees, religiously affiliated secular institutions, such as colleges and hospitals, will be required to provide this benefit.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America praised the final policy, which will ensure that women have access to birth control like any other preventive care. Planned Parenthood, which provides birth control to two million women a year, has released a new [white paper](#) that describes the transformative effects of birth control on society, the ways in which the Affordable Care Act will exponentially expand that effect, and the urgent battle to move forward — not turn back the clock — on ensuring women's access to basic preventive health care.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America President Cecile Richards stated, "This means that women will have access to birth control at no cost, no matter where they work. This is a historic moment for women's health and economic security. Birth control is basic health care for women, and this policy treats it like any other kind of preventive care. Throughout history, birth control has had a transformative impact on women's health, education, and economic opportunities, and this policy expands access to birth control like never before.

"It's appalling that we still have to fight for access to birth control in 2013. Planned Parenthood began as a tiny storefront birth control clinic 97 years ago, and today we dispense birth control to two million women every year. We know firsthand that when women have access to the full range of birth control options without cost being an issue, we all benefit."

Earlier this year, Planned Parenthood and other organizations submitted 350,000 comments from the public, urging the Obama administration to maintain the birth control benefit. The comments were from people in all 50 states

explaining how access to birth control has helped them and their families.

### PPAM Launches Decline to Sign Campaign

In May, Michigan Right to Life received approval from the Michigan Board of Canvassers to begin signature collection for its "No Taxes for Abortion" ballot initiative. This harmful initiative would remove the right of insurance companies to cover abortion for women without the purchase of a separate rider plan. It contains no exceptions for rape, incest, or the health of the woman.

In response to this dangerous initiative, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan (PPAM) has launched a Decline to Sign campaign in which Michiganders are asked to sign a pledge that states that they will refuse to sign any petition which attacks women's health care.

The official launch of the campaign involved door-to-door canvassing in Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and Lansing. PPAM staff and volunteers knocked on more than 2,000 doors during the third week of June to spread the word about Decline to Sign and begin gathering pledges.

The campaign includes an option for other organizations to get involved as well by ordering their own Decline to Sign toolkit in order to gather pledges from their own members and constituents. The toolkit includes pledge cards, stickers, fact sheets and instructions.

For more information or to sign the pledge, please visit [www.michiganwomenact.org](http://www.michiganwomenact.org). To order a toolkit, please email [dani.vilella@ppmchoice.org](mailto:dani.vilella@ppmchoice.org).