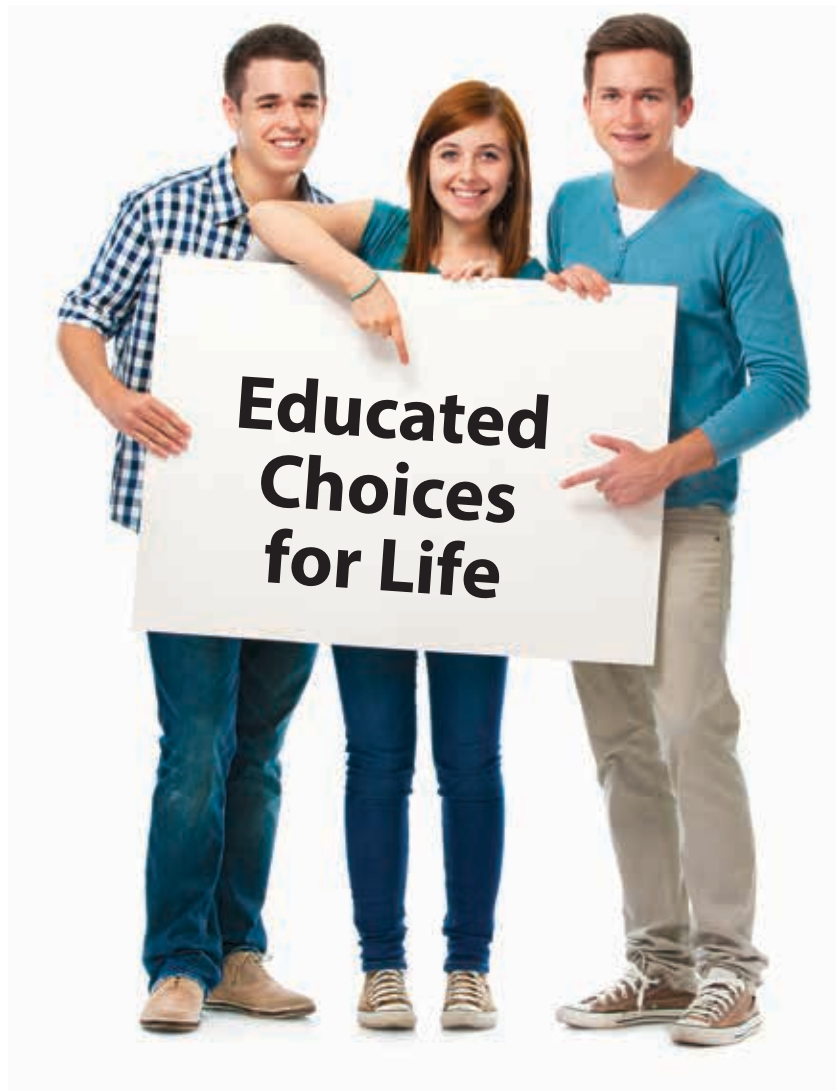




# Voices for Choice

**Fall 2019**

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



*Citizens for Choice promotes reproductive justice through education, health care access and advocacy. We exist to inform and enable choice.*

## Nevada County Citizens for Choice Bids Farewell to President Sharon O'Hara

The board of Nevada County Citizens for Choice is eternally grateful to Sharon for her leadership, generous contributions of every kind and her years of devoted service to C4C. She has always been enthusiastic, helpful, dedicated, and kind. And she has been everywhere! No matter what event one attended, there was Sharon—setting up, helping to greet, staffing booths at countless organizational events. And not only for C4C—Sharon took on leadership positions for AAUW, League of Woman Voters, and the Democratic Club. She is an out-of-the-box thinker and a master at creating connections between people. We will soldier on but will surely miss the long-time beating heart of our organization.

Sharon moved to Orange County as of October 7 and is currently surrounded by packing boxes in her new home. We wish her well in her new life, and hope she has time for plenty of R&R—she deserves it!

—Thank you for everything, Sharon!





**Stay Informed!** Keep up on public policy by visiting: [www.citizensforchoice.org/home/policy-activism/](http://www.citizensforchoice.org/home/policy-activism/)

## STUDENT ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION STALLS

By Elaine Sierra, Public Policy Director

We who advocate for and support the right of students to receive comprehensive, fact-driven sexual health education have been successful in California on many fronts. The enactment of the California Healthy Youth Act in 2015 was a major victory, aimed at ensuring that students receive both HIV prevention education and comprehensive sex education that is medically accurate, objective and unbiased, in grades 7–12.

Putting curriculum that satisfies the law's requirements into Nevada County classrooms has been a long process, sometimes painfully so. That truth is exemplified by the recent admission that Nevada Union High Schools and Bear River High schools nevertheless allowed presentations to be made to their students by someone from a local crisis pregnancy center, Living Well. Given that organization's opposition to abortion and insistence on abstinence until marriage, it

is not surprising that their presentations dealing with sexual health would not comply with state law, and, among their other failings, would not provide medically accurate information about contraception and condoms.

So we must applaud the decision of Nevada Joint Union High School District to bar Living Well from their schools, and district Superintendent Brett McFadden's announcement that the district intends to rely solely on its own trained instructors. Citizens for Choice received similar assurances from prior school district administrations, however, so we must and will closely follow what the school district does.

We are also heartened that, as a result of the district's decision, Living Well was forced to revoke its federal grant of \$450,000 (which it was awarded by the Health and Human Services Department).



The grant is under a Title V program to support teaching "sexual avoidance," a euphemism for abstinence-until-marriage instruction that has proven to be ineffective at preventing teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The state of California has never accepted grants from this program. The federal agency has responded by making the funds available to organizations such as Living Well. We oppose the program and the notion of using taxpayer dollars to support abstinence-based programs rather than the comprehensive sex education our youth need and deserve.

## IT'S TIME. PERIOD.

It's 2019, and yet, 34 States still have a sales tax on period products rendered as non-essential items. While tampons and pads are being taxed as "luxury items," items like Viagra are considered necessities. To make matters worse, 1 in 4 women struggle to afford period products due to lack of income.

In the first city-wide study on period poverty, it was found that 46% of low-income women had to choose between a meal and period products. Because of the period stigma that makes menstruation a taboo topic, many don't consider the impact on a homeless or low-income woman when they get their period. Incarcerated menstruators and those detained in US border camps often report that they are denied access to menstrual products as a punitive measure.

PERIOD POVERTY is one of America's most untold stories: homeless menstruators and incarcerated individuals often "make-do" by going to extreme lengths to turn brown paper bags, socks, and other things into makeshift sanitary pads.

**PERIOD POVERTY IS A SYSTEMATIC FORM OF DISCRIMINATION THAT OPPRESSES LOW-INCOME WOMEN.**

California Assembly Bill AB 31—No Tax on Tampons (Garcia) will take effect January 1, 2020 AB 31 and continues the movement to make feminine hygiene products exempt from the sales and use tax at both the state and local level. The women of California will no longer have to pay over 20 million dollars annually for taxes on tampons, sanitary napkins, tampons,

menstrual sponges, and menstrual cups. These items will be exempt from sales taxes from January 1, 2020 until January 1, 2022. **The bill was signed by the Governor and became law on June 27, 2019.**



## Judging, Always Judging

This article by Lynn Wenzel appears by permission of the Union newspaper. It originally ran on Saturday, November 1, 2019

Ms. McLaughlin, there you go again (Oct. 9, The Union). Accompanied by the usual rants against women who wish to maintain their own bodily autonomy, your judgmentalism and criticism shorn of pity, turn your “opinion” pieces into fetal fetishism.

As a writer and a journalist, I recognize cherry-picking when I see it. Just because the new president of Planned Parenthood is identified as being a “renowned social justice leader” does not mean she has nefarious intent. What it does mean is that she has a broad knowledge of social challenges and looks to achieve the goals of reproductive health care for all women, rich or poor. To conclude that Planned Parenthood (and other clinics by association) is committed only to abortion profit and political activity and to claim that is why it refused Title X money is to miss the point entirely.

Telling women’s reproductive clinics that they can have Title X funds only if they agree to not even mention abortion, even to save a life, even if that clinic doesn’t provide abortions, is like telling a doctor who receives funds from the National Institute of Health that she can only use them if she promises not to treat anyone over 65.

And while it might be satisfying to Ms. McLaughlin to moralize to young people, that is exactly why they come to Planned Parenthood — because they cannot talk to their parents or their pastor or even a friend. Being confronted with a young woman who has experimented with sex or who is terrified that she might have a sexually transmitted disease is not an occasion to lecture or penalize. Planned Parenthood’s purpose is to answer questions honestly, without

condemnation, understanding that young women want to be informed participants in their own lives, not “victims” as McLaughlin labels them.

Planned Parenthood’s purpose is to answer questions honestly, without condemnation, understanding that young women want to be informed participants in their own lives, not “victims” as McLaughlin labels them.

Planned Parenthood does not encourage young people to be promiscuous. What it does do is inform clients about the options available to them if they have made the decision to engage in sexual activity.

Another point of fact—the new sex ed curriculum being presented in California’s public schools is not being taught by Planned Parenthood instructors. In Nevada County, these classes are being taught by teachers at the schools who have been trained in that specific curriculum. No doubt you are disappointed that members of “abstinence only” groups are not allowed to teach. There are many reasons for this, the main one being it is neither complete nor correct information and, if taught, sends young adults out into the world with faulty and dangerous half-knowledge.

McLaughlin seems especially angry that Planned Parenthood receives any funds at all. How does a medical clinic or any other nonprofit service organization survive? It takes money as she surely knows. At this point, McLaughlin throws in a horror story of a young woman who, being forced to get a medical abortion by her boyfriend, shows up at a clinic, bleeding and miscarrying. Planned Parenthood steps in to save her life, yet

somehow, McLaughlin ends up blaming the organization for the entire incident.

Perhaps Ms. McLaughlin should save her vitriol for the cruel partner of this woman. Accusing Planned Parenthood of refusing to help trafficked women and girls is a lie. Here in Nevada County, the low-or-no-cost clinic run by Citizens 4 Choice and staffed by medical personnel from Women’s Health Specialists communicates closely with organizations in the county that help rape and assault victims and trafficked girls.

You say you are interested in how society treats its children. Then I hope you are speaking up on behalf of the babies and children separated from their parents at the border who will suffer lifelong mental issues due to the trauma, or the one in five children in California who go to bed hungry each night.

Does the pain of living children bother you, or is it only fetuses who get your attention? And how about their mothers?

Right now, there are an estimated two million female victims of rape in California. And, California is one of the largest sites of human trafficking in the U.S. Many of those trafficked are children. Would you force these victims to carry a rapist’s child to term?

I, too, agree with Senator Kamala Harris that “Society is judged on how it treats children.” Right now, millions of living children are suffering. How about we stop judging women, young or old, for choosing governance over their own bodies and start advocating for children among us who are suffering this very minute. Now that’s an idea I think we can all get behind.

## WHAT IS OBRIA?

Obria “Medical” Clinics is a national chain of anti-abortion propaganda centers created to confuse and manipulate pregnant women with the goal of preventing them from learning about or accessing abortion services. Their so-called “clinics” give false information about abortion and they also refuse to provide evidence-based contraceptive choices to their patients, including oral contraceptives, IUDs or condoms—the very tools that help prevent unplanned pregnancy and therefore, abortion. Family planning funds are now going to Obria from the Department of Health and Human Services. Further, the rule change to bring Obria into the sphere of HHS funding has created a “gag rule” that prevents Title X funds from reaching legitimate health care providers such as Planned Parenthood and our own Women’s Health Specialists who provide the medical care at C4C’s Clinic!. Millions of dollars are being taken away from real doctors and clinic providers who give actual, legal medical advice and given instead to anti-abortion propaganda networks. We are fortunate to live in California where funding for legitimate reproductive health care is still available. But for many poor women across the U. S., there is nowhere else to turn. Obria’s



California clinics will receive a total of \$5.1 million in Title X grants from HHS from 2019 to 2022. Obria’s website states it will use its Title X funds to push “natural family planning” only. Emboldened by changes in the law under the current administration, Obria is now pushing its affiliate expansion plan nationwide. It recently launched a \$240 million fundraising campaign, much of it earmarked for brand and affiliate expansion. There are currently 3,000 stand-alone pregnancy centers in the U. S. earmarked for uniting under Obria’s national brand. Keep your Representatives and Senators on speed dial. And vote!

## FIGHTING EXTREME ABORTION BANS

*Excerpted and edited from an article by Susan Battenwieser in Women’s Media Center, News & Features, October 9, 2019*

According to the Black Women’s Health Imperative (BWHI), their members are trying to be proactive, but “there are so many things coming at” them. They are being forced to deal with an onslaught of extremism. BWHI is working to ensure that black women’s health and wellness, including access to comprehensive reproductive health care is a major issue in the 2020 elections. (See Black Women Vote: National Health Policy Agenda, a blueprint for policymakers)

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) supports clergy who speak out about the necessity for abortion access and support workers who are often subject to spiritual abuse, confirming that the work they do is powerful and blessed.

Pro-choice groups in progressive states are working on legislative initiatives to help people living in states with extreme bans and anti-choice politicians in charge. In July, the Portland, Oregon City Council unanimously passed a resolution that calls on their city attorneys to file amicus briefs to legal challenges to bans in Alabama and Ohio. “Oregon is a beacon for reproductive health access and hailed as one of the most pro-choice states in the country,” said Kimberly Koops, policy director for NARAL Pro Choice Oregon. “We are hoping to see similar resolutions in other progressive cities. If you live in a state that has good access to comprehensive reproductive health care, you still have to work to keep it that way. People can’t be complacent.”

On September 13, the California State Legislature approved SB24, requiring all on-campus student health centers at California’s Public Universities to provide access to medication abortion in

*Continued on next page....*

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Nevada County  
 Citizens for Choice



# Voices for Choice

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Continued from previous page....

the first ten weeks of pregnancy. Governor Newsom signed it into law in October. Over 130 organizations supported this bill, including Citizens for Choice. "Because queer people lead the campaigns and gender-neutral language is used in the bill, the efforts also help make the reproductive health movement more inclusive and egalitarian," said Noel Jones, a senior at UC Berkeley.

Advocates are applying pressure to companies that claim a commitment to gender equity, but don't back that up with specific support for reproductive freedom. Equity Forward, a reproductive rights watchdog organization, launched the Defund the Bans campaign, which calls on 66 major companies to stop making political contributions to lawmakers behind extreme abortion bans. "It's so much easier now to find out who is giving to what," said Mary Alice Carter, senior advisor to Equity Forward. "Then people can use their power as consumers. In June, 187 CEOs and business leaders from major companies including Bloomberg, Yelp and H&M, signed onto a full-page ad in The New York Times denouncing the abortion bans.

Advocates are bracing for a possible increase in charges brought against women who end their own pregnancies. "Recently enacted abortion bans are sowing seeds of doubt and confusion," said Jill E. Adams, executive director of If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice. "Even before the bans, people in at least 20 states had been criminally investigated and charged under laws manipulated and misapplied by overzealous prosecutors hellbent on punishing someone who may have ended their own pregnancy. The more restricted, stigmatized, and inaccessible clinic-based care becomes, the more people will need to self-manage abortions at home. [These methods] are now embraced as a safe option and necessary component of abortion care."

Advocates urge people to make their voices heard through activism and through speaking about their experiences with reproductive health care in general. By not talking about abortion and reproductive health, we let anti-choice legislators set the agenda.

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You help us provide services at *The Clinic!*, education programs and advocacy for us all.



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Thank you! Contributions may be made to Citizens for Choice through e-scrip at Safeway, Save-Mart, and SPD Market.



Remember to shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). When you #StartWithaSmile, Amazon donates to Nevada County Citizens for Choice.

## THE REAL RISK TO WOMEN'S LIVES

By Lynn Wenzel

Edited, adapted and enhanced from an article by Toni Van Pelt in the Fall 2019 issue of *Ms.*

Political and religious conservatives continue to perpetuate scientifically disproven myths such as the non-existent link between breast cancer and abortion as well as passing Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP Laws) that unnecessarily require clinics to meet the building standards of surgical centers.

**FACT:** According to the Guttmacher Institute, “a first-trimester abortion is one of the safest medical procedures” you can have. Dr. Jeanne Conry, former president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) says, “the mortality rate associated with a colonoscopy is more than 40 times greater than that of abortion.”

**REAL RISKS:** The ACOG warns that up to nearly one in four women suffer from perinatal depression. Other risks include anemia, high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, infection and death. More women are dying of pregnancy complications in the U.S. than in any other developed country. This is particularly serious for women of color. Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes than white women. By restricting access to

reproductive care with the Title X gag rule, passing abortion bans and enacting laws based on junk science, acute health crises are bound to occur. Women’s deaths should NOT be caused by political agendas.

**SOME GOOD NEWS:** Some states are moving to protect women and advance reproductive health care. New York recently passed the Reproductive Health Act which codifies Roe and “treats abortion as health care, not a criminal act.” New York also enacted an act that requires insurers to cover all contraceptives approved by the FDA as well as the Boss Bill, preventing employers from restricting women’s health care decisions based on the employer’s religious beliefs.

**MOVING FORWARD:** Reproductive justice must remain front and center in primary debates going forward and in next year’s elections. There is strong bipartisan support for access to safe, legal abortion. 61% of those polled, support Roe and 66% support having comprehensive reproductive care in their community (poll by the Center for Reproductive Rights). Let’s all call out the liars and speak up for women’s health.



## TEEN BIRTH RATES CONTINUE TO DECLINE

This month, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) also reported that California’s teen birth rate dropped 11.5% between 2016 and 2017. CDPH attributed the declining rates to improved access to reproductive health services and increased use of contraception; delayed sexual intercourse; and public health prevention, education and support programs.

Despite the declines, racial and geographic disparities still persist. African-American and Latina adolescents are three to four times more likely to experience a teen birth than their Caucasian peers. Rates also vary dramatically across counties. Imperial and Tulare counties register the highest rates in the state.

**Thank you to participating condom fairy locations throughout Nevada County!**

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