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Men for Women's Choice

By [Michael Kimmel, Michael Kaufman, and Harry Brod \(http://womensmediacenter.com/author/profile/michael-kimmel-michael-kaufman-and-harry-brod\)](http://womensmediacenter.com/author/profile/michael-kimmel-michael-kaufman-and-harry-brod) | March 12, 2012



Panel at Congressional hearings on birth control

On the issue of contraceptives and choice, most men quoted and pictured in the media recently have opposed women controlling their reproductive health. The authors plan to change that.

In the month since this photo was taken at Congressional hearings on President Obama's Birth Control Coverage Mandate, the debate about women's access to all forms of birth control—from condoms to abortions—has suddenly emerged as a contested political terrain. Various groups of men—Fox men, Republican candidate men, Republicans-in-office men—have made women's reproductive freedom the cutting social issue of the moment.

Every Republican candidate has spoken out against President Obama's mandate that no institution can claim a religious exemption for discriminating against women, and their right to coverage for birth control. Conservative columnists have all weighed in, reaching a rhetorical high point (and moral low point) with Rush Limbaugh's fulmination against Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke.

(It was only when Limbaugh went from the thundering misogynist to the just plain creepy that even his supporters began to inch away. This was when he infamously said that if he "was going to have to pay for her to have sex" that she be required to post videos of in on the internet. We're confident that the Viagra that Limbaugh himself has said he uses is covered under his health insurance plan. Since "we" are subsidizing his ability to have sex... On second thought, no videos please. Obviously, Ohio State Senator Nina Turner had a similar thought when she [introduced a bill \(http://2012.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/03/ohio-senator-introduces-bill-to-regulate-mens-sexual-health-and-prove-a-point.php?m=1\)](http://2012.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/03/ohio-senator-introduces-bill-to-regulate-mens-sexual-health-and-prove-a-point.php?m=1) requiring psychological screenings for men seeking coverage for ED drugs. And when Virginia considered a bill requiring a woman get an ultrasound before an abortion, State Senator Janet Howell introduced an amendment requiring a rectal exam and cardiac stress test for men before they could obtain the ED meds. Her amendment failed, but only by 21-19.

But just as women were so obviously missing from the panel of "experts" testifying about women's reproductive choices, so too have *men* been invisible on the other side: visibly standing up in favor of women's choices.

That is why we're encouraging men to launch "[Men for Women's Choice.](http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Men-For-Womens-Choice-2012.pdf)" (<http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Men-For-Womens-Choice-2012.pdf>)

Why? Because, like an ever-growing number of men around the world, we think that women should control their own bodies.

All people should have the right to autonomy and bodily integrity. For women and men, this often means the same thing, but for women it has an additional meaning: the ability to make choices regarding whether she will conceive and bear a child.

We believe that no man should be able to force a woman to bear a child she does not want. No man should be able to limit her ability to obtain safe and effective means of contraception.

There are those, of good conscience, who believe that abortion and contraception interfere with the workings of God. Men who support women's choice respect each person's right to make their own birth control and abortion choices based on their beliefs. We also believe that none of us has the right to limit or interfere with a woman's moral position or personal choices, nor interfere with health care providers who are assisting her right to exercise those choices.

As men for women's choice, we emphasize our belief that no man—no husband, no boyfriend, no judge, no doctor, no politician, and no religious leader—should have control over a woman's body. Ever.

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With a wave of fresh attacks on women's rights, now is the time for us, as men, to speak out with loud and clear voices to express our profound concern. We urge men:

- to speak out in our communities, media, places of worship and halls of government in support of a woman's right to safe and effective means of contraception and abortion;
- to oppose laws and regulations that make it difficult to obtain these medical services;
- to keep abortion out of criminal law and see it solely as a medical procedure to be utilized by a woman in consultation with her doctor;
- to support enhanced government funding and policies to ensure that women's reproductive rights are not only rights on paper, but that all women, regardless of where they live, where they work, or their financial resources, can obtain safe and effective birth control and abortion if they so choose;
- to support positive sexuality education in our schools that focuses on healthy relationships, sexual decision-making, and reproductive health (including the safe and effective use of birth control);
- to support political candidates who support these rights.

Men for Women's Choice is not an organization nor a conventional campaign. It's an affirmation to be acted upon. We are men of all walks of life, religions, races, ethnicities, and political affiliations. We are part of a decentralized effort to encourage men to speak out in support of women's right to access safe and effective means of birth control and abortion.

We choose not to speak *for* women but to listen to them, and talk with other men about what we hear.

We believe that choice is an essential component of any meaningful definition of freedom. And we are convinced that women's equality is in everyone's interest.

Click here to download the "Men for Women's Choice" statement (<http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Men-For-Womens-Choice-2012.pdf>) and some ideas about what men can do to support women's reproductive freedom.

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author alone and do not represent WMC. WMC is a 501(c)(3) organization and does not endorse candidates.

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