



special election issue: concerns for women

why this issue?

What happens in the years after the upcoming election will have strong effects on the lives and health of women and children, on our pocketbooks and on our safety. To prepare this issue, we've waded through hundreds of websites, looking for those as untitled toward one party as possible—which is hard and sometimes impossible. We've ended up quoting from Bush's website here, as well as from factcheck.org (described as being "independent" by Vice President Cheney in his debate with Senator Edwards); we've quoted from the Washington Post, and CNN, and the National Women's Law Center... so we're hoping there's something here for everyone. We avoided as much as possible any writing that was vituperative or unsupported by unverifiable events.

We at **tbt** do believe that, overall, John Kerry is in a better position to take the actions that help women be safer, have better paying jobs and useful health care, and raise their children in the environment most conducive to health, safety, and democratic action. (Notice that we used the small-d "democratic" there, please!) **But you have to make up your own mind, of course.**

Morris Fiorina, a senior fellow with the Hoover Institute, an organization that can hardly be called liberal (Condoleezza Rice is also a senior fellow with the institute), has recently published a book, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, in which he points out "on the whole, the views of the American citizenry look moderate, centrist, nuanced, ambivalent—choose your term—rather than extreme, polarized, unconditional [and] dogmatic" [<http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/PubAffairs/Newsletter/04071/fiorina.html>]. He points out, for example, that most citizens of this country do not like abortion but don't think it should be outlawed. Fiorina and his colleagues conducted "open-ended interviews" with numbers of people: "Based on several criteria, each person was assigned a number between zero (totally pro-life) and six (totally pro-choice.) The average score was 4.2, leaning pro-choice, but not overwhelmingly so... [N]o state or region differed from that average by more than a few tenths of a point" [<http://daily.nysun.com/Repository/getmailfiles.asp?Style=OliveXLib:ArticleToMail&Type=text/html&Path=NYS/2004/07/06&ID=Ar00104>].

We at **tbt** are not ambivalent, as we noted above, but we are interested in keeping discussion open. In acknowledging the desire for nuance that Fiorina attributes to the U.S. electorate, we do our best here to offer you various actions and positions taken by the presidential candidates of the Republican and Democratic parties.

We hope some of what we offer here helps you in thinking through the complex issues of this election... or points you toward sources for further reading and research.

Do you want access to the morning-after pill and control over when/if you start a family?

Bush

Bush is opposed to making the morning-after pill available over the counter, in opposition to the advice of one of the FDA's advisory committees of scientists, who have accused Bush of politicizing the health concerns of women [http://www.religiousconsultation.org/News_Tracker/politics_of_emergency_contraception.htm].

Since 1998, Congress has required health plans in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program that cover prescription drugs to cover prescription contraceptives. In President Bush's first budget request he proposed eliminating this coverage, even after the Office of Personnel Management, which administers the FEHB program, reported that this coverage did not add any cost to the FEHB premiums. Congress didn't accept the proposal. [AP coverage: http://www.evot.com/index.asp?Page=/news_section/2001-04/04122001Contraceptives.asp]

Kerry

Kerry has voted in favor of allowing schools to offer the morning-after pill to teenagers in emergencies. He supports "common sense" parental notification laws, and voted for allowing a sibling, at least 19 years old, to give consent for an abortion. He voted for allowing the physician and patient to decide if it would be in the "best interest" of the pregnant daughter to inform the parents [factcheck.org]. Kerry opposed federal guidelines that create financial incentives for abstinence-only sex education and disincentives for medically accurate, comprehensive, abstinence-plus sex education. [http://www.aidsvote.org/profile_kerry.html]. For more information on the success (or not) of abstinence only programs, visit <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/stateevaluations/minnesota.htm>.

Do you want the choice to stay at home with your children?

Bush

Bush signed the "Family Time Flexibility Act." Under the plan, bosses have the flexibility to pay overtime (as has been required for more than 70 years under federal law) or to "offer" time off instead—at the employer's, not the worker's, convenience.

Bush's Department of Labor repealed a rule drafted under President Clinton that allowed states to use unemployment funds to provide for paid family or medical leave. The rule had been drafted to help men and women who wanted to take time off to care for a child or a sick family member but could not afford it. [National Women's Law Center, "Slip Sliding Away," April 2004; nwlc.org]

"It is true as Bush claims that a family of four making \$40,000 a year got nearly a \$2,000 tax cut (when compared to tax rates in 2000), according to the independent Tax Policy Center and others. That is, if both children were under age 17 and so qualified for the doubled per-child tax credit." [<http://www.factcheck.org/article260.html>]

Kerry

Kerry supported the Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act which provides eligible workers with unpaid job-protected time off to meet important family responsibilities, such as caring for a new baby or taking care of a sick child. Since its enactment, more than 35 million Americans have been able to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave without risking their job [<http://kerry.senate.gov/text/cfm/record.cfm?id=190265>]. Kerry has said he will work to increase the Childcare Tax Credit [http://www.connectforkids.org/usr_doc/bush_kerry_question_6.html].

to learn more about the two candidates' positions on women's wage issues, please go to: <http://womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2037>

Do you want the government involved in your most intimate health issues?

Bush

In February 2004, under Attorney General John Ashcroft, the Justice Department subpoenaed health care providers calling for the private medical records of women who had abortions. The Justice Department argued that patients no longer possess a reasonable expectation that their histories will remain completely confidential [<http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/02/13/abortion.records.ap/>]. In the third debate Bush failed to answer whether or not he would protect Roe vs. Wade, but his history of supporting pro-life judges, such as James Leon Holmes who has written the wife is to subordinate herself to her husband and has claimed that rape victims don't get pregnant, suggests his stance. [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A32206-2004Jul6.html>]

What follows is from www.georgewbush.com and www.whitehouse.gov:

In his State of the Union address, Bush stated, "We will double federal funding for abstinence programs, so schools can teach this fact of life: Abstinence for young people is the only certain way to avoid sexually-transmitted diseases." In addition to this, Bush said, "By Executive Order, I have opened billions of dollars in grant money to...faith-based charities."

To promote "a culture of life," the President has signed into law the Born Alive Infants Protection Act, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act. He has also reinstated the Mexico City Policy to end Federal funding of international organizations that promote family planning.

The Mexico City Policy is also known as the Global Gag Rule by those who oppose it. This policy does not allow non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to perform abortions in cases other than a threat to the life of the woman, rape, or incest; provide counseling and referral for abortion; or lobby to make abortion legal or more available in their country. If they do not comply with this, all funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development is terminated.

In his second term, Bush promises to defend the Partial Birth Abortion Act, prevent federal funding for abortion, support parental notification, and emphasize abstinence education. Essentially, Bush is opposed to abortion of any kind and feels the only option is abstinence until marriage.

Kerry

Kerry, while stating that he personally believes life starts at conception, has favored a legal right to abortion over the entire course of his Senate career. He says he will only nominate individuals to judicial positions if their record shows a respect for the full range of constitutional rights, including the right to choose and the right to privacy. [<http://www.factcheck.org/article266.html>]

from <http://www.voicesforworkingfamilies.org/states/michigan/mistatstats.cfm>: Michigan spends \$25,269 a year on prisoners. Tuition at the University of Michigan for in-state residents is \$9,600 a year.

Do you want there to be fewer abortions?

Here is an article we found online, at sojo.net: **Pro-life? Look at the fruits**

Dr. Glen Harold Stassen

I am a Christian ethicist, and trained in statistical analysis. I am consistently pro-life. My son David is one witness. For my family, "pro-life" is personal. My wife caught rubella in the eighth week of her pregnancy. We decided not to terminate, to love and raise our baby. David is legally blind and severely handicapped; he also is a blessing to us and to the world.

I look at the fruits of political policies more than words. I analyzed the data on abortion during the George W. Bush presidency. There is no single source for this information—federal reports go only to 2000, and many states do not report—but I found enough data to identify trends. My findings are counterintuitive and disturbing.

Abortion was decreasing. When President Bush took office, the nation's abortion rates were at a 24-year low, after a 17.4% decline during the 1990s. This was an average decrease of 1.7% per year, mostly during the latter part of the decade. (This data comes from Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life using the Guttmacher Institute's studies).

Enter George W. Bush in 2001. One would expect the abortion rate to continue its consistent course downward, if not plunge. Instead, the opposite happened.

I found three states that have posted multi-year statistics through 2003, and abortion rates have risen in all three: Kentucky's increased by 3.2% from 2000 to 2003. Michigan's increased by 11.3% from 2000 to 2003. Pennsylvania's increased by 1.9% from 1999 to 2002. I found 13 additional states that reported statistics for 2001 and 2002. Eight states saw an increase in abortion rates (14.6% average increase), and five saw a decrease (4.3% average decrease).

Under President Bush, the decade-long trend of declining abortion rates appears to have reversed. Given the trends of the 1990s, 52,000 more abortions occurred in the United States in 2002 than would have been expected before this change of direction.

How could this be? I see three contributing factors:

First, two thirds of women who abort say they cannot afford a child (Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Web site). In the past three years, unemployment rates increased half again. Not since Hoover had there been a net loss of jobs during a presidency until the current administration. Average real incomes decreased, and for seven years the minimum wage has not been raised to match inflation. With less income, many prospective mothers fear another mouth to feed.

Second, half of all women who abort say they do not have a reliable mate (Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life). Men who are jobless usually do not marry. Only three of the 16 states had more marriages in 2002 than in 2001, and in those states abortion rates decreased. In the 16 states overall, there were 16,392 fewer marriages than the year before, and 7,869 more abortions. As male unemployment increases, marriages fall and abortion rises.

Third, women worry about health care for themselves and their children. Since 5.2 million more people have no health insurance now than before this presidency—with women of childbearing age overrepresented in those 5.2 million—abortion increases.

continued on back...

Do you want good healthcare?

FROM THE KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION "EMPLOYER HEALTH BENEFITS 2004 ANNUAL SURVEY":

"The rate of growth of health care premiums moderated somewhat in the last year, but continues to grow at double-digit rates. Perhaps reflecting several years of high premium growth and a slow economy, the survey also found that the percentage of all workers receiving health coverage from their employer fell from 65% in 2001 to 61% in 2004. As a consequence, we estimate that there are at least five million fewer jobs providing health insurance in 2004 than in 2001." [http://www.kff.org/insurance/7148/index.cfm]

the comparative plans...

the following comes from <http://www.factcheck.org/article207.html>, posted 06/24/04:

Kerry "Paperwork" Ad: Accurate

Kerry ad says medical paperwork costs hundreds of billions and his plan could save money. He's right. But what about the expense?

A [Kerry campaign ad] shows the candidate making a pitch for his health care plan, which he says "will save literally billions of dollars" by streamlining medical paperwork. He's right.

Not mentioned, of course, is that the biggest savings in his plan would hold down the cost of health insurance by having federal taxpayers pick up most of the tab for "catastrophic" medical bills.

ANALYSIS

The ad is named "Paperwork." It's totally positive, never mentioning Bush. Kerry simply makes one of his standard arguments for the healthcare plan he first outlined in 2003.

STATISTICS ON TARGET

Kerry seems to be on target with his statistics. According to official federal government estimates, the US really did spend \$1.55 trillion on health care in 2002. The figure is certainly even higher this year, given that health-care spending is rising even faster than the general level of inflation.

Kerry's \$350 billion figure for what's spent on health care paperwork and administrative overhead is far less certain, but still a reasonable estimate. Various scholarly studies have put the cost of paperwork and administrative overhead at anywhere from 7.6% to 31% of the total cost of healthcare in the US. Kerry's figure is just over 23%, on the high side but still not unreasonable.

Kerry could have defended an estimate as high as \$480 billion a year had he cited the 31% figure, which comes from a study last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. But the same issue of the *New England Journal* also carried an editorial saying the 31% figure is too high by at least \$50 billion, and noted other studies that have put the figure as low as 7.6%—which still would figure to \$118 billion for 2002 alone. The editorial also said it isn't possible to estimate the cost of administrative overhead accurately in any case. So the real figure is anybody's guess, and Kerry's \$350 billion figure was well within the range of the estimates.

SAVINGS CLAIM ON FIRM GROUND

Kerry also is on reasonably firm ground when he says his healthcare plan "can reduce the cost of healthcare" and "will save literally billions of dollars in healthcare costs in America by becoming more streamlined and more efficient." One of Kerry's proposals would require private insurance companies that do business with the government to use simplified technology for submitting and processing their claims.

Kenneth E. Thorpe of Emory University, an expert in financing of health care, says from 30% to 40% of health care transactions still rely on paper claims, which can cost from \$5 to \$20 each. Automated claims can slash

that cost to as little as fifty cents each. Thorpe estimates that Kerry's proposal to require more automated claims processing would save an average of \$4 to \$5 on each claim, with total savings just to the government of \$6 billion in the first year, and nearly \$80 billion over 10 years. There would be further savings to individuals and businesses, too, but Thorpe gave no estimate for those.

To be fair, the President hasn't been idle in this area. This year Bush established a new "National Coordinator for Health Information Technology" whose job is to come up with a plan to speed up the adoption of electronic health records and electronic prescriptions for medications. But unlike Kerry, the administration isn't proposing mandatory use of automated claims and isn't claiming its initiative will cut costs greatly. The head of the new office, David Brailer, testified June 17 that the administration's goal is to use information technology to improve the quality of care and reduce medical mistakes, and that it "may even reduce health care costs" as well.

WHO PAYS FOR LOWER PREMIUMS?

Kerry is also correct when he says his plan can "lower... premiums" for health insurance, though he fails to mention that most of the savings would result from shifting the expense to federal taxpayers. The heart of the Kerry plan would have the federal government pay health plans 75% of the cost of "catastrophic" medical bills—roughly those over \$50,000 a year for one patient—in return for which the plans would agree to cut the premiums charged to workers by 10%. Thorpe estimates that Kerry's reinsurance plan alone would cost the government \$257 billion over 10 years. Thorpe estimates the cost of the entire Kerry healthcare package at \$653 billion over 10 years, even after subtracting estimated savings from such things as increased use of computerized medical claims and requirements for more aggressive "disease management" of such expensive ailments as congestive heart failure and diabetes.

To be sure, that's taking money from taxpayers to subsidize businesses and workers who pay for health insurance, just as the President's supporters often say. It's also true, according to Thorpe's estimates, that Kerry's costly plan would extend health insurance to 27 million persons who don't have it now, while Bush's rival health care proposal would cover only an additional 2.4 million.

Footnote: Thorpe is Chair of the Department of Health Policy & Management in the Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University, Atlanta, GA. During the Clinton administration he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Policy in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Despite his Clinton connection, Thorpe's estimates of the cost of the Kerry plan have been cited without question by the Bush campaign to justify their contention that Kerry will be forced to raise taxes to pay for his plan.)

do you want there to be fewer abortions...? continued from front

The U.S. Catholic Bishops warned of this likely outcome if support for families with children was cut back. My wife and I know—as does my son David—that doctors, nurses, hospitals, medical insurance, special schooling, and parental employment are crucial for a special child. David attended the Kentucky School for the Blind, as well as several schools for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. He was mainstreamed in public schools as well. We have two other sons and five grandchildren, and we know that every mother, father, and child needs public and family support.

What does this tell us? Economic policy and abortion are not separate issues; they form one moral imperative. Rhetoric is hollow, mere tinkling brass, without health care, health insurance, jobs, child care, and a living wage. Pro-life in deed, not merely in word, means we need policies that provide jobs and health insurance and support for prospective mothers.

Glen Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, and the co-author of *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, *Christianity Today's* Book of the Year in theology or ethics.

What business climate do you want for women?

Bush

Bush has appointed a number of high-visibility women to his cabinet and inner circle, including labour secretary Elaine Chao, the first Asian-American woman cabinet secretary, and Condoleezza Rice (formerly on Chevron's Board of Directors), the first African-American national security adviser. But Bush has also:

- Closed the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach. Among its duties, the office advocated on behalf of women's issues and kept the President and his administration informed about women's need.
- Attempted to close the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor (DOL), in existence since 1920, but eventually decided to leave it in operation.
- Abolished the Equal Pay Matters Initiative (an effort to achieve pay equity for women) at the Department of Labor.
- Weakened enforcement of job discrimination cases by the Department of Justice and abandoned several pending sex discrimination suits.

from an October 2004 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, www.usccr.gov/pubs/bush/bush04.pdf

Kerry

from http://articles.shwing.com/article_0066.php:

Congress Restores Kerry's Women-Owned Business Program; Job-Creating Program Funds over 30 Women's Business Centers Across Country

Sept 15, 2004

The U.S. Congress late yesterday approved legislation (H.R. 5008) that will reinstate the Women's Business Center Sustainability program at the Small Business Administration (SBA)—a program that Sen. John Kerry initiated in 1999 and that funds over 30 women's business centers across the country....

A study recently released by the National Women's Business Council shows that over the past two years, while funding for the Women's Business Center program has remained essentially flat, the number of clients served increased by 91 percent and the number of new businesses started went up 376 percent. The study also found that the businesses counseled by women's business centers had an economic impact of \$500 million in gross receipts (\$51.4 million in profit) and created 12,719 new jobs.

"With women-owned firms opening at one-and-a-half times the rate of all privately held companies, it is important that we fully support and strengthen assistance for women in business," Kerry said.

In 1999, Sen. Kerry introduced the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act (S.791) to ensure that the most experienced and successful women's business centers could continue to serve the growing community of women-owned businesses. The bill was signed into law (PL 106-165) by President Clinton on Dec. 9, 1999.

WHAT IS tbt POLICY ?

The technobabe times is dedicated to the empowerment of women in all aspects of technology. We want tbt to be a place where voices not usually heard or seen on campus or in the community can be seen & heard. We want to be a publication that encourages new and different voices. And so: we solicit thoughtful, reflective, critical writings (or drawings or mixed media pieces or poems or...) that offer us all positive views and smart actions...

If you have any ideas, questions or comments—or wish to advertise in tbt—please contact our staff at tbt@mtu.edu. You may also write the list to submit a piece of work or to become part of the tbt staff (all girls and boys interested in the cause are welcome!).

THANK YOU to the CCLI for help on this issue.

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THE USA PATRIOT PLEDGE

America is facing many serious challenges, both at home and abroad. Meeting these challenges will require Americans to make some new sacrifices over the coming four years. President George W. Bush is ready to lead us through these difficult times, but liberals don't believe our citizens are ready to face hard choices. The political gridlock that results prevents the full realization of the goals of the Bush presidency.

The USA Patriot Pledge will show politicians in Washington—both conservative and liberal—that there are millions of patriotic Americans who stand ready to do their part. By taking a few minutes of your time to make the Pledge, you will be providing invaluable assistance to your country and President in a time of need.

- I volunteer to have a permanent nuclear waste storage facility in my community.
- I volunteer to send my children to fight for America in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, North Korea, or anywhere else President George W. Bush deems necessary.

Names _____

Ages _____

Schools _____

Pref. branch _____

- I volunteer to give up some constitutional rights to support the war on terrorism.

Specifically: _____

- I volunteer to allow government agents to search my home without warrant.

- I volunteer to have my phone tapped and my internet use monitored.

- I volunteer to allow government agents access to my medical records.

Doctor's name and address: _____

Major diseases: _____

Medications: _____

- I volunteer to allow government agents access to what I read at the library.

- I volunteer to further give up the following constitutional rights (describe here): _____

- I volunteer to live with the consequences of global warming if it means increased profit for American industry.

- I volunteer to help generate more greenhouse gases if it results in a competitive edge for my country.

- I volunteer to never divorce, and to stay with my spouse until death, no matter how incompatible we may be.

- I volunteer to not have an abortion, even if I was raped, or am the victim of sexual abuse or incest, or if tests show my unborn child to have serious congenital disease or deformity. [Note: Skip this item if you are not a woman.]

- I volunteer to not use drugs developed from stem cell research, and to not allow my dependents to do so, even if they are suffering from a life-threatening illness for which there is no alternative cure.

- I volunteer to support tax cuts favoring the elite, and I volunteer to pay more than my share of taxes to allow the elite to invest their money in our country's economy. [Please skip this item if your annual income exceeds \$400,000.]

- I volunteer to forfeit my social security checks when I retire in order to pay down the debt America is accruing.

My name: _____

My Social Security #: _____

from <http://www.yesbushcan.com/pledge.shtml>