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THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
NATIONAL OFFICE



CONTACT:
Beverly McFarland
(202) 429-1965

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 23, 1991

LEAGUE CALLS FOR STRONG CIVIL RIGHTS BILL -- NO DAMAGE CAPS

WASHINGTON, DC -- The League of Women Voters today urged the United States Senate to vote for a strong civil rights bill and to support an amendment to remove caps on damages awarded in sex discrimination suits. The Wirth-Durenberger-Mikulski amendment to S 1745, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, would eliminate the proposed cap on damages in cases of intentional sex discrimination currently included in S 1745.

"The issue of sex discrimination in general -- and sexual harassment in particular -- is on the minds of many Americans today," said Susan S. Lederman, President of the League of Women Voters. "It is inconceivable that the Senate would vote to restrict fair compensation to women who have experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. By failing to provide an effective remedy, S 1745 will allow sex discrimination to continue unchecked."

The League message to Senators expressed concern about alienating and misleading characterizations of the legislation and urged a tone of debate that would not endanger the chance for restoration of civil rights.

"The League of Women Voters is outraged about the tenor of the debate around the Civil Rights Act," Lederman said. "It is critical, as the debate continues, that we focus on the real issue: that all workers -- without regard to race, sex, disability, religion or ethnic origin -- are entitled to equal employment opportunity and equal redress for discrimination."

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June 1, 1990

FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT

In November 1989, pro-choice members of the House and Senate introduced the Freedom of Choice Act (HR 3700, S 1912). This legislation is a direct response to the Supreme Court's decision in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services in July 1989. Since the Webster decision, many state legislatures are considering (and several have passed) measures that would restrict a woman's access to safe reproductive health care.

The Freedom of Choice Act is based on the principles of the Supreme Court's 1972 decision in Roe v. Wade. It would prohibit states from placing undue restrictions on an individual's exercise of the right of reproductive choice. Specifically, the Freedom of Choice Act prohibits states from enacting legislation that would restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy before fetal viability. After viability, states would be able to restrict abortions except where they are necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.

Hearings have been held on the legislation this spring in the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights and in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Additional hearings are scheduled, although no date has been established. There are currently 121 House cosponsors and 25 Senate cosponsors. A list of cosponsors is attached to this memo.

The League of Women Voters is actively supporting the Freedom of Choice Act. The League has a strong commitment to the concept that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices. We believe that since the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, there is the potential for diverse application of this right.

We are particularly concerned that because of the Webster decision, reproductive choice has become a matter of chance; in some states, constitutional rights will be fully protected, while in others, efforts will be undertaken to undermine those very same rights. It is up to Congress to pass the Freedom of Choice Act and make it clear that no governmental entity may place undue restrictions on an individual's right to reproductive choices.

MESSAGE

Ask your representative and senators to cosponsor and support HR 3700 and S 1912. Tell them that the League strongly supports the Freedom of Choice Act. We believe that this legislation is needed to secure the right for all American women to make reproductive choices without unnecessary governmental interference.

SENATE CO-SPONSORS TO FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT
S. 1912

Adams, Brock (D-WA)
Baucus, Max (D-MT)
Bingaman, Jeff (D-NM)
Bradley, Bill (D-NJ)
Burdick, Quentin (D-ND)
Chafee, John (R-RI)
Cohen, William (R-ME)
Cranston, Alan (D-CA)
Glenn, John (D-OH)
Inouye, Daniel (D-HI)
Jeffords, Jim (R-VT)
Kassebaum, Nancy (R-KS)
Kennedy, Ted (D-MA)
Kerry, John (D-MA)
Lautenberg, Frank (D-NJ)
Matsunaga, Spark (D-HI)
Metzenbaum, Howard (D-OH)
Mikulski, Barbara (D-MD)
Packwood, Bob (R-OR)
Pell, Claiborne (D-RI)
Robb, Charles (D-VA)
Simon, Paul (D-IL)
Stevens, Ted (R-AK)
Wilson, Pete (R-CA)
Wirth, Tim (D-CO)

HOUSE CO-SPONSORS TO FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT
H.R. 3700

ARIZONA

Udall, Morris (D)

ARKANSAS

Alexander, Bill (D)
Anthony, Beryl Jr. (D)

CALIFORNIA

Anderson, Glenn (D)
Bates, Jim (D)
Beilenson, Anthony (D)
Berman, Howard (D)
Boxer, Barbara (D)
Brown, George (D)
Campbell, Tom (R)
Dellums, Ronald (D)
Dixon, Julian (D)
Dymally, Mervin (D)
Edwards, Don (D)
Fazio, Vic (D)
Hawkins, Augustus (D)
Lantos, Tom (D)
Lehman, Richard (D)
Levine, Mel (D)
Martinez, Matthew (D)
Matsui, Robert (D)
Miller, George (D)
Mineta, Norman (D)
Panetta, Leon (D)
Pelosi, Nancy (D)
Roybal, Edward (D)
Stark, Pete (D)
Torres, Esteban Edward (D)
Waxman, Henry (D)

COLORADO

Campbell, Ben Nighthorse (D)
Schroeder, Pat (D)
Skaggs, David (D)

CONNECTICUT

Gejdenson, Sam (D)
Johnson, Nancy (R)
Kennelly, Barbara (D)
Morrison, Bruce (D)
Shays, Christopher (R)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Fauntroy, Walter (D)

FLORIDA

Fascell, Dante (D)
Gibbons, Sam (D)
Johnston, Harry (D)
Lehman, William (D)
Smith, Larry (D)

GEORGIA

Lewis, John (D)

HAWAII

Akaka, Daniel (D)
Saiki, Patricia (R)

ILLINOIS

Collins, Cardiss (D)
Evans, Lane (D)
Hayes, Charles (D)
Yates, Sidney (D)

INDIANA

Jontz, Jim (D)
Visclosky, Peter (D)

MAINE

Brennan, Joseph E. (D)
Snowe, Olympia (R)

MARYLAND

Cardin, Benjamin (D)
Hoyer, Steny (D)
Mfume, Kweisi (D)
Morella, Connie (R)

MASSACHUSETTS

Atkins, Chester (D)
Frank, Barney (D)
Kennedy, Joseph (D)
Markey, Edward (D)
Studds, Gerry (D)

MICHIGAN

Conyers, John (D)
Crockett, George (D)
Ford, William (D)
Levin, Sander (D)
Wolpe, Howard (D)

MINNESOTA

Frenzel, Bill (R)
Sabo, Martin (D)

MISSOURI

Clay, William (D)
Wheat, Alan (D)

MONTANA

Williams, Pat (D)

NEW JERSEY

Gallo, Dean (R)
Pallone, Frank, Jr. (D)
Payne, Donald (D)
Torricelli, Robert (D)

NEW MEXICO

Richardson, Bill (D)

NEW YORK

Ackerman, Gary (D)
Boehlert, Sherwood (R)
Downey, Thomas (D)
Engel, Eliot (D)
Gilman, Benjamin (R)
Green, Bill (R)
Lowey, Nita (D)
Mrazek, Robert (D)
Owens, Major (D)
Rangel, Charles (D)
Scheuer, James (D)
Schumer, Charles (D)
Slaughter, Louise (D)
Solarz, Stephen (D)
Towns, Edolphus (D)
Weiss, Ted (D)

NORTH CAROLINA

Price, David (D)
Rose, Charles (D)

OHIO

Edward Feighan (D)
Stokes, Louis (D)

OREGON

AuCoin, Les (D)
DeFazio, Peter (D)
Wyden, Ron (D)

PENNSYLVANIA

Gray, William (D)
Kostmayer, Peter (D)

RHODE ISLAND

Machtley, Ron (R)
Schneider, Claudine (R)

TENN

Ford, Harold (D)

TEXAS

Andrews, Mike (D)
Bryant, John (D)
Bustamante, Albert (D)
Frost, Martin (D)
Wilson, Charles (D)

VERMONT

Smith, Peter (R)

VIRGINIA

Boucher, Rick (D)

WASHINGTON

Dicks, Norman (D)
McDermott, Jim (D)
Miller, John (R)
Swift, Al (D)
Unsoeld, Jolene (D)
Washington, Craig (D)

WISCONSIN

Kastenmeier, Robert (D)
Moody, Jim (D)

PPFA - 5-11-90

THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

ACTION ALERT

June 19, 1991

TO: State and Local League Presidents, DPM and LAS Subscribers

FROM: Susan S. Lederman, President

RE: Overturn of the Title X "Gag Rule"

Immediate action is needed to persuade Congress to overturn the Title X "gag rule," which was upheld by the Supreme Court on May 23, 1991. The court's decision in Rust v. Sullivan will have a devastating effect on family planning and reproductive choice. It is critical that you contact your Senators and Representative to urge them to support any and all legislative initiatives to overturn the gag rule.

THE TITLE X PROGRAM AND THE SUPREME COURT DECISION

Title X is the family planning section of the Public Health Service Act. For over twenty years, Title X family planning clinics have offered non-directive counseling to patients on their options for family planning and reproductive health issues, including abortion. In 1988, the Reagan administration issued regulations denying Title X patients their right to receive -- and family planning providers their right to provide -- information concerning abortion. The regulations, known as the gag rule, were stayed until a series of court challenges were heard.

The Supreme Court decision in Rust v. Sullivan upheld the gag rule. As a result of this decision, Title X providers will be prevented from providing complete medical information and patients will be denied access to the information they need to make informed decisions. Providers have 60 days from the date of the decision to comply with the gag rule.

LEAGUE POSITION

The League of Women Voters has a strong and long-standing commitment to the concept that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices. In addition, under the Meeting Basic Human Needs position's equal access to health care, the League has taken the position that families living in poverty must have access to adequate health care. Clearly, the Rust decision will have a negative impact on women living in poverty who use publicly funded clinics.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

The Title X Pregnancy Counseling Act has been introduced in both the House and the Senate specifically to overturn the gag rule. The legislation states that family planning clinics in the Title X Family Planning program should be able to offer complete information and referrals to women facing unintended pregnancy. It explicitly states that Congress intends that patients served by the program be provided with non-directive counseling and the information necessary to make informed decisions.

The Title X Pregnancy Counseling Act has been introduced in the Senate as S 323. The primary sponsor is Senator John Chafee (R RI) and there are now 46 Senate cosponsors. On Thursday, June 6, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee passed S 323 by a vote of 12-5. In the House, Representative John Porter (R IL) has introduced the legislation as HR 392. There are currently 163 House cosponsors. Some members of Congress who are "anti-abortion" are supportive of family planning and of non-directive counseling that provide patients with the information necessary to make informed decisions. No action has been taken in the House of Representatives.

Because of the 60 day time limit, members of Congress are examining other legislative vehicles that could be used to overturn Rust v. Sullivan. The House of Representatives will soon be considering the Labor/Health and Human Services appropriation -- possibly before they adjourn for the July 4th district work period. This appropriation bill includes the appropriation for the Title X program and we expect that this section of the bill could include language to overturn the gag rule. The Senate will consider the Labor/HHS appropriation after the July 4th district work period.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Call and write your Senators and Representatives to urge their support for legislation to overturn the gag rule. Senators and Representatives will be returning to their states for the July 4th district work period and this will be a good time to meet with them.
2. Work in coalition with other groups in your community who are concerned about the Rust decision. These include women's groups, health providers and non-profit groups who might be concerned about the implications of the ruling.

THE MESSAGE

Because of time constraints, the basic message for members of the House and Senate is to support all legislative initiatives to overturn the gag rule. The Title X program must continue to provide non-directive counseling that supplies patients with the information necessary to make informed decisions.

1. Support language in the House Labor/HHS appropriation to overturn the gag rule. Emphasize the need for quick action to overturn this serious limitation on family planning programs.
2. Cosponsor and support S 323 and HR 392, the Title X Pregnancy Counseling Act without amendments. Even if your representatives have voted against reproductive choice legislation in the past, urge their support. Some members of Congress who are "anti-abortion" are supportive of family planning.

March 8, 1990

To: State Presidents and State Contacts on PPRC

From: Nancy M. Neuman, President

Re: Reproductive Choice

In September, the national office sent out a questionnaire to all state Leagues regarding the issue of reproductive choice. Thirty-two state Leagues responded to the choice questionnaire. Since it became evident from the responses that choice is a priority issue for many state Leagues, we have put together this mailing with the results of the questionnaire and updated information on activity at the national level.

As we reported, the League of Women Voters did endorse the November 12 Mobilization for Women's Lives. At its January meeting, the national board voted to make reproductive choice a priority issue at the national level. The League's volunteer Lobby Corps is currently lobbying House members in support of choice legislation.

In order to further League work on this issue, the board also voted to join the national Pro-Choice Coalition. As always in making decisions about coalitions, the national board reviewed its established criteria carefully and concluded that LWVUS membership in the coalition was advisable. Some earlier board concern that the coalition might form a Political Action Committee (PAC) has been alleviated, since key organizations in the coalition have formed their own PACs. Of course, we will continue to closely monitor this and other issues that relate to the League's nonpartisanship policy. Membership in the coalition involves no financial commitment from the League.

FEDERAL LITIGATION

In the fall of 1989, the League of Women Voters agreed to sign on to an amicus brief in the case of Turnock v. Ragsdale. Turnock v. Ragsdale challenged an Illinois statute which would have effectively restricted access to abortions, including first trimester abortions, by providing strict licensing requirements for abortion clinics.

On November 22, the Illinois Attorney General and the American Civil Liberties Union reached a settlement of the case. Settlement negates the need for a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, which had scheduled oral argument for December 5. Instead, a motion has been filed to ask the Supreme Court to send the case back to the federal district court (which originally had held the regulations to be unconstitutional) to review the settlement agreement.

Under the settlement, abortion clinics would be defined as "special surgical centers," allowing them to perform abortions through the eighteenth (18th) week of pregnancy without having to meet the rigorous equipment and construction requirements imposed on hospitals. Clinic/surgical center physicians would be required to have surgical privileges at licensed hospitals. Clinics performing abortions after the 18th week would be required to meet standards similar to those for hospitals. Doctors would be able to continue counseling, as well as performing abortions.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

There has been a great deal of activity in Congress on the choice issue. For the first time in many years, Congress passed appropriations bills that contained language to allow funding for abortions in cases of rape or incest. This language was contained in the Labor/Health and Human Services Appropriations bill and the D.C. Appropriations bill. While the language was ultimately removed after vetoed by President Bush, it was encouraging to have both houses of Congress pass expanded funding for abortions. There is no doubt that this issue will be revisited in the fiscal year 1991 appropriations process.

At the end of the last session of Congress, pro-choice members in both Houses introduced the Freedom of Choice Act of 1989, H.R. 3700 and S. 1912. A copy of the bill and a list of the 114 House cosponsors and 23 Senate cosponsors is enclosed with this mailing. The Freedom of Choice bill places into law the principles of the Roe v. Wade decision. H.R. 3700 provides that no state can restrict access to abortion prior to fetal viability. It further provides that no limits can be placed when the life or health of the mother is endangered.

The LWVUS supports the Freedom of Choice bill. It is critical that as many members as possible sign on as cosponsors. We are currently lobbying Representatives to cosponsor the bill. Hearings on the legislation are expected early in the session. We will also be monitoring appropriations bills as they affect the issue of reproductive choice.

LEAGUE CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE

As noted above, in September the national office sent out a questionnaire to all state Leagues regarding the issue of reproductive choice. We have received thirty-two replies in response to the questionnaire. Of these, the majority of state Leagues have PPRC listed as one of several priorities. It is clearly a priority for twenty-three of the state Leagues.

The breakdown of the 32 responses is:

not a priority -3- (all 3 are reexamining)
low priority -6-
one of several priorities -18-
top priority -5- (3 of these checked both top and several)

State League activities in the past year have run the gamut. Leagues have testified, lobbied, and organized grassroots on choice legislation, collected petitions in support of reproductive rights, and done extensive press work on the issue. A number of Leagues mentioned that they issued the press release sent out by national after the Webster decision.

When asked if they had reexamined their priorities in light of the Webster decision, fourteen states said they intended to so; eight said no (it was already a priority for five of these states) and ten states indicated that they had already done so -- most at their spring conventions in anticipation of the Webster decision.

Twenty-four of the Leagues belong to a "coalition on choice". At least fourteen of the Leagues indicated that they play a lead role in the coalition -- usually by sitting on the executive board/steering committee. Other organizations in the coalitions are primarily the state affiliates of AAUW, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, NOW, and ACLU. The coalitions themselves are divided between long-standing choice coalitions (18) and new post-Webster coalitions (13). One state had no coalition. Most Leagues seemed to be very sensitive to the potential pitfalls of coalitions, particularly in light of the political activity of other organizations.

Sixteen states responded that their local Leagues have been active; fifteen indicated that they had not been. This question did not apply to the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia. Of the active sixteen, much of the local activity was in response to state League action alerts on state issues.

Thirty of the states reported that they did not have a state position on reproductive choice. Only one of the responding states has a position (New Jersey) and one is considering it (Pennsylvania). The other states use the national position.

Twenty-four of the state Leagues anticipated that choice would be a hot issue in their state. Five did not think so and three states just didn't know. In the twenty-four "active" states, legislative debates were expected to center on parental consent laws, state funding for abortions, "fetus as person" legislation, sex education, and, in several states, attempts to ban abortions completely. Almost all state Leagues indicated that state legislators (particularly anti-choice legislators) were very uncomfortable with this issue and less than pleased that it was so very visible after the Webster decision.

When asked about the League's niche in state activity, the responses were uniform. State Leagues see their role as representing the "reasoned voice" -- respectable, middle-of-the-road, mainstream thinking. Terms used included "deliberate, intellectual, educated, sensible and rational." Some Leagues answered the question substantively by noting that the League focus will be on privacy and the rights of the individual.

Some specific reports: Louisiana, Florida, Pennsylvania and Minnesota were all aware that their states are on the cutting edge on this issue. The California League reports that some local Leagues have been involved

in defending abortion clinics from Operation Rescue. The North Carolina League sent out a member survey on priority issues and PPRC was #1. Several states indicated that there was some anti-PPRC sentiment among a few members; however, none seemed unduly concerned about this. For the most part, state Leagues seem knowledgeable about the issue and comfortable with the PPRC position.

These results were very helpful to the National Board in its consideration of action on the issue of reproductive choice. Any additional information on activity from state Leagues would be most helpful as we continue to work on this issue of critical importance.