

"If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament." Florynce Kennedy

Voice for Choice

Newsletter of the Kentucky Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Summer 2017

Make Our Sidewalks Safe!

Pro-Choice Groups Call For A Safety Zone At The EMW Clinic

by Ann T. Allen, Editor

How to balance the safety of citizens against the right of anti-choice protesters to express their ideas and opinions? This was the central issue at an open meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Louisville Metro Council on Wednesday, June 14. The room was packed with about one hundred people, most of whom waved yellow and orange signs urging Public Safety Committee members to "make our sidewalks safe."

Should Louisville adopt an ordinance that creates a buffer, or safety zone—an area in which protesters would not be allowed to approach patients-- around the EMW Clinic, Kentucky's last open abortion clinic? No specific proposal was on the table—rather, the hearing was designed to help Committee members decide whether to propose such a zone to the Metro Council.

All those who spoke agreed that the situation at EMW is dangerous to patients and to public safety. Since May 13, 2017, when police arrested eleven demonstrators for blocking the clinic entrance, sidewalk protests in front of the EMW Clinic, Kentucky's last open abortion clinic, have grown increasingly loud and aggressive.

According to Major Eric Johnson of the Louisville Metro Police Department, police officers stationed at the clinic



Maggie Steptoe, Caitlin Willenbrink, Pat Canon, and Kate Cunningham wait to testify at the Metro Council hearing June 14.



Supporters of the safety zone at the Metro Council hearing.

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Change Begins With Each Of Us

By Honi Marleen Goldman, Chair, Reproductive Rights for Kentucky PAC

Reproductive Rights for Kentucky PAC, (RRFKY) is the only pro-choice federal PAC in Kentucky, and is not associated with or authorized by any federal or state candidate or any campaign committee. A PAC (political action committee) is an organization that pools contributions from its members and uses these funds to campaign for or against candidates, ballot initiatives, or legislation. The mission and purpose of RRFKY is to be a non-partisan, Kentucky-focused, political action committee that publicly and financially supports those elected officials and viable candidates who safeguard women's rights.

In order that more candidates may receive the maximum amount RRFKY can give, PAC expenses are kept to a minimum (there is no paid staff). Nearly 100% of contributions to RRFKY go directly to the candidates.

While there was no May primary this year, the political cards are being shuffled now to see who will run for what Congressional and General Assembly seats on Primary Day, Tuesday, May 22, 2018. These elections might bring a change in the majority parties, both in Kentucky and in Washington D.C. The stakes could not be higher! Up for election, just in the Kentucky primary alone, will be all the Representatives for U.S. and Kentucky House along with nineteen Kentucky Senate seats.

The big question is whether people, especially women, who marched, rallied and protested, will take the next step to change our government by filing their candidacy papers by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, January 30, 2018. If we want to make our government more workable and civil, then we must get people, especially women, to be on the ballot.

For many women, the biggest drawback is the hostile atmosphere of today's politics. Our elected leaders have turned the presidency, the governorship, the Kentucky General Assembly and U.S. Congress into wrestling matches and TV reality shows.

We, the voters, are so taken in by politicians' promises that that we drink the Kool-Aid they offer us. We re-tweet their lies as fact, and believe them when they allege voter fraud, deny their campaigns' ties to Russia, make excuses for sexual harassment, and denounce the liberal media.



Honi Marleen Goldman

The best way to improve our Commonwealth and federal government is to get in there and clean up the mess. RRFKY cannot give money to a candidate who is not on the ballot!

So aren't you tired of elected officials sexually harassing women? Then run for office. Aren't you tired of lies about politicians' tax returns and unethical trading of political favors? Run for office.

Aren't you tired, scared, disgusted and fed up by:

- Elected officials' outlandish comments and just downright stupidity.
- Legislation on hot-button extreme issues that is rushed through and only ends up in the courts, wasting tax dollars paying for legal fees.
- Hypocritical politicians who tear apart our health care while they enjoy the top medical care in the country.
- Unqualified people appointed to cabinet positions because they were big donors to political campaigns.
- Elected officials who skirt or disregard laws, because they feel that laws don't apply to them.

THEN RUN FOR OFFICE!

You are not too old, not too young (if over 21 for certain offices) AND you need no experience. Our broken government will not change unless we send some different people to Frankfort and to Washington. And that change begins with each of us.

Want to help Kentucky's ONLY pro-choice PAC?

Contribute online at
<http://rrfky.org/contribute/>
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Reproductive Rights for Kentucky PAC
 PO Box 33071

Louisville KY 40232-3071

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REPRODUCTIVE
RIGHTS *for Kentucky*

The Truth About the ‘Defunding’ of Planned Parenthood

By Heather Bruner, Kentucky Donor Engagement Officer, Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky

Republican Senate Leadership in Washington recently had to push the brakes on their new health care proposal but it will be back on the table in a few short weeks. Supporters of this bill, led by Kentucky’s Senator Mitch McConnell, have been proudly proclaiming that it will finally defund Planned Parenthood.

In response to these politicians’ slanderous attack on Planned Parenthood, we must reclaim the narrative of who we are. We are an American institution that has been fighting for access to reproductive health care, information, and rights for almost one hundred years. Planned Parenthood is a leader in current medical standards and guidelines for health care. We are the nation’s largest and most trusted source for accurate and non-judgmental sex education, and one in five women will access our services in their lifetime.



Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky

Finding affordable, trustworthy health care is difficult for any person, and for many of our patients, Planned Parenthood is their only source. We are an indispensable part of this country’s health care system. In fact, the American Public Health Association says that it is ‘ludicrous’ to think that other providers could absorb the client load and services of Planned Parenthood should we be shut out of Medicaid reimbursements. Planned Parenthood is the leader in our service field and finds innovative ways to deliver health care and information to those who need it most. We break down structural barriers to accessing expert reproductive health care and we make it timely, relevant, and equitable for all people— regardless of income, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

Backed by ten million supporters, Planned Parenthood is stronger than we ever have been. We believe that access to

*Christie Gillespie, CEO,
Planned Parenthood of
Indiana and Kentucky*



Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky

health services and to information about their health is a right for all people. If politicians were serious about improving health outcomes and reducing the rate of unintended pregnancy and the need for abortion, they would increase funding for Planned Parenthood—because that’s what we do. We are experts in family planning, and the most important thing that we can do in anticipation of this dangerous bill is to ensure that the people who use our health centers can continue receiving high-quality, compassionate care regardless of their economic situation.

Gifts to Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky can be designated to support general operating expenses or to the program of most concern to the donor. If the donor specifies this, donations will be used in Kentucky. A donation to the Betty Cockrum Compassionate Care Fund will cover health care expenses for anyone who cannot afford the services they need. Donations can also be made to specific funds that support individual health centers, education programs, abortions, or grassroots advocacy.

If Congress passes this bill as it currently stands, contraceptives could be an out-of-pocket expense that may be out of reach for many Kentuckians. The Louisville Implant Program provides a long-acting reversible contraceptive that is implanted into a patient’s arm. This procedure costs around \$1,000 per person, but with this fund it is finally made accessible to those who would not be able to afford it. In sum, your support is needed to sustain all that we do.

For more information on Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky, please get in touch with Heather Bruner, Kentucky Donor Engagement Office, 842 S. 7th Street, Louisville KY 40203, (502) 400-2302 or heather.bruner@ppink.org. Donate: www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-indiana-kentucky, or 1-800-430-4907.



The Day OSA Came to Louisville

By Maggie Steptoe, Board Member, A Fund Inc.

The Saturday before Mother's Day is usually a big one for anti-abortion protesters. Saturday, May 13, 2017, was no exception. Operation Save America (OSA) brought their "Act" to the sidewalk in front of the only abortion clinic in Kentucky—Louisville's EMW Women's Clinic.



Demonstrators at the EMW Clinic. Joseph Randall Spurgeon, a local anti-choice leader, is on the left.

So what was it like being on the sidewalk on that Saturday? Please remember: this is one person's perspective with one pair of eyes, with one pair of ears and from one position on the sidewalk. There were 35 other escorts, 35 other pairs of eyes and ears, and 35 different observation spots.

It was frightening. I was worried about what might happen and my fears were confirmed upon arrival at 5:45 AM. Cars and panel trucks covered with anti-abortion signs and bumper stickers filled almost all the parking spaces on both sides of the street and every space in a five-dollar parking lot used by patients. This block was under siege. About one hundred protesters stood shoulder-to-shoulder at the clinic property line, creating a human fence to prevent access to the clinic. Escorts were stationed at the clinic doors and behind the fence of protesters—double protection against a clinic invasion. Incessant music from the eight-foot-tall loud speakers blared at a volume that even an escort who is deaf could hear.

As we waited for the clinic to open, protesters invaded the personal space of escorts, threatening them with damnation. A cult-like discipline was pervasive. Adults pulled children from the line of protesters and used them as props to shame patients and escorts, saying, "Look at this beautiful child. Don't murder your child." The women danced and sang and the men strutted back and forth on the sidewalk waving well-worn Bibles. Suddenly, at the sound of the clinic doors being unlocked, the protesters surged toward the clinic entrance, sat with their backs up against the clinic door and

folded their hands in their laps. They formed a wall.

It was also heartening. By the time the clinic entrance was blocked, there were eleven Louisville Metro Police Department squad cars blocking traffic. Law enforcement officers had been called to the clinic about 6:00 AM and upon arrival they summoned additional officers. They were disciplined and calm. They protected the safety of every person who was present and treated all with respect. They also took control of the situation and enforced the law. The officers cleared the "human fence" and told the protesters not to block the entrance. They also reminded the protesters of where the boundaries of the entrance were.

It was the first time in my four years on the sidewalk that the police officers asked that the volume be lowered on the loud speakers aimed to penetrate the clinic waiting-room windows. The alley behind EMW was blocked off by the police to allow patients to enter the clinic safely through a rear door. Every single patient that day was able to have the procedure she had chosen. Ten people, seven men and three women, were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing. One protester also was charged with resisting arrest.

Make no mistake. The protest on Saturday, May 13, was organized by individuals who believe they have "right" on their side, who are committed and dedicated to their mission, and who will use any means to achieve their objective. They believe that they are "called" to harass perpetrators—clinics, doctors, escorts—and rescue the victims—the patients, the fetuses.



Rusty Thomas, a leader of Operation Save America, is arrested at the EMW clinic.

Operation Save America is a Christian fundamentalist, anti-abortion organization with headquarters in Waco, Texas, and led by Rusty Thomas. It has its roots in Operation Rescue National of the 1990s—a group led by Flip Benham, Keith Tucci, and Randall Terry. These are well-known anti-abortion activists who promoted clinic "rescue" missions. OSA also has been active in protests against homosexuality and Islam. The Anti-Defamation League has identified OSA as "one of the more active organized anti-abortion extremist groups."¹

OSA. *Cont. from page 4.*

Why Louisville and why now? In a press release after the arrests, OSA proclaimed: “These Rescuers are exercising the Christian doctrine of interposition. Interposition takes place when one stands in the gap between a strong oppressor and a victim in order to rescue the victim from the oppressor’s hands.”^{2,3} Some seasoned activists and observers, for example Robin Marty⁴ and Jessica Mason Pieklo,⁵ have speculated that the group’s strategy is to challenge the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act with these clinic blockades in order to test who or what the Trump administration will defend—the protesters or the law. Pieklo noted that, in an interview with the Louisville *Courier Journal*, Rusty Thomas described his group as ministers of the gospel and rescuers of children being slaughtered—thus casting themselves as religious and invoking their right to perform these religious activities.

David Cohen, co-author of “Living in the Crosshairs: The Untold Stories of Anti-Abortion Terrorism,” believes that this type of low-level harassment—as opposed to violent acts—will send a message that clinics, escorts, and patients “should fear for your safety because maybe people like me who stand in front of the clinic on a Saturday morning or whatever day aren’t going to be the ones to murder you, but our message is going to get across to someone who is crazy enough to do that.”⁶

OSA had been here before—on Friday, February 3, and Saturday, February 4, to solidify plans for their July 22-29, 2017, convention in Louisville. During the February visit, the OSA members and local leaders of similar anti-abortion organizations—Abolish Human Abortion/P82 in Kentucky and Southern Indiana—protested at EMW, at Manual High School and Noe Middle School during school hours, and at the University of Louisville Outpatient Clinic. This

leadership meeting in Kentucky was considered so successful that Rusty Thomas named the local head of the P82 group, Joseph Randall Spurgeon, as the Director of the Kentucky Division of OSA.

During the February visit, the leaders of both organizations had an on-campus meeting with R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). SBTS later withdrew its support of the group’s July convention.⁷ Governor Matt Bevin found time in his busy schedule to stop by SBTS and address the participants on February 3. A little over a month later on March 13, EMW was notified of a order from the Bevin administration to cease and desist operations.⁸

Several key concepts undergird the zeal of OSA’s actions: the doctrine of the “lesser magistrate,” nullification, and abortion as murder. “The *doctrine of the lesser magistrates* declares that when the superior or higher civil authority makes an unjust/immoral law or decree, the lesser or lower ranking civil authority has both the right and duty to refuse obedience to that superior authority. If necessary, the lower authority may even actively resist the superior authority.”⁹ Another doctrine, connected to the “lesser magistrate” idea, is “nullification,” which holds that states can nullify federal laws with which they disagree.

At a 2016 OSA week-long clinic harassment event in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Thomas urged the police to “insist their states immediately outlaw abortion, grant the police the authority to shut down any death camp in their jurisdiction, and arrest those who participate in the barbaric act of abortion.”¹⁰ Thomas and his followers believe that abortion is murder. Thus, those who have illegal abortions should be prosecuted and punished as murderers.¹¹

Cont. on page 7

What action can you take?

1. Never underestimate the resolve or the commitment of these protesters.
2. Talk about abortion access in your faith communities. Organize support for women in your community who need rides to distant abortion clinics (KHJN: <http://www.kentuckyhealthjusticenetwork.org/>). Contribute to organizations that raise money to pay for practical support (KHJN: <http://www.kentuckyhealthjusticenetwork.org/>) and abortion procedures (A Fund: www.kyafund.org; www.facebook.com/kyafund).
3. Lobby the Metro Council Members to enact a revised Disorderly Conduct ordinance that provides for a safety zone for medical clinics.

4. Work with organizations promoting sex education in the schools.
5. When you go to your doctor for a check-up, ask how she/he handles referrals for abortions? Be prepared to provide a list of resources, verbal or written.
6. When you go to the drug store, check out the family planning section. Are Emergency Contraception Plan B (Morning-after Pill) options available on the shelf? Federal regulations require that Plan B options be available to most women without having to ask for them.

Become an escort. To learn more about escorting and how to get started, go to www.eversaturdaymorning.net; and email your interest to eversaturdaymorning@gmail.com.

The Voices We Can't Hear

By Ann T. Allen, Editor

The recent aggressive demonstrations in front of the EMW clinic remind us of how unequal the debate on abortion rights has become. Anti-choice activists, including these protesters, regard abortion as a public issue and speak about it in all settings—the White House, the legislatures, the churches, the courts, and the sidewalk. But we seldom hear from those who are most directly affected—the women who seek abortions. For them, this is a private and personal issue. If their choice does become public—as when they visit the abortion clinic—they encounter demonstrators who use the weapons of shame and intimidation to silence them.

So it is important that we hear the voices of those who choose abortion. A Fund, founded in 1993, helps to fund abortions for women who cannot afford them. Some of these women write thank-you notes that tell us something about the reasons for their decisions. Here are some excerpts from these letters (of course, the names of the women have been omitted).



"I feel strongly that I need this abortion because I'm only fourteen years old and I'm still a student in school. I have dreams for my life ahead and goals."

"I have four children; my youngest is six months. My situation is pretty simple but still important. My fetus is seventeen weeks old and has spina bifida. I'm nineteen years old and currently enrolled in a local college."

"I am writing you this letter to say thank you for your help. I am a recovering addict who is also presently in treatment. During my active addiction I got pregnant. Also during that period I was raped twice. Shortly thereafter I found myself incarcerated, pregnant, no money and nowhere to turn. But thanks to you, I have a chance to start over. Because without the funding I don't know what I would do."

"To have this procedure done will help save my life. Again, I thank you."

"I would just like to thank you so very much. You are my miracle! There is just no way that I could have come up with the money because I am a twenty-five year-old divorced single mother of a two-year-old girl. My mother gave me what money she could but it wasn't enough, so I really am grateful for your funds. And I will be getting my tubes tied to prevent any other accidents."

Please make your tax deductible donation to:
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Kate Cunningham, head of A Fund

Is your Kroger Card Working for KRCRC?

With 2 simple steps, you can be helping KRCRC fight for reproductive rights each time you shop – at no cost to you!

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If you've signed up for us before, thank you! But Kroger "zeroes out the books" each August 1st. Please take a couple of minutes to make sure your Kroger purchases are working for us all year!



KRCRC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Kentucky Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is to mobilize the moral power of people of faith and conscience to safeguard and advance reproductive justice in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

We do this through advocacy, education, and support of organizations with related goals.

EMW Safety Zone *Cont. from page 1.*

on Saturday mornings are trained to enforce the laws and are ready to deal with any situation that “rises above the normal.” However, the police are also committed to protecting the liberty of all individuals to express their ideas in a public area such as a sidewalk.

Two speakers from the pro-choice community claimed that a safety zone would help the police to protect public safety without unduly limiting free expression. Kate Cunningham, the director of A Fund (an organization that helps to fund abortions for women who cannot afford them) pointed out that police often create zones for protesters in order to avoid violent clashes (for example, when Donald Trump spoke in Louisville). The Supreme Court’s 2014 decision in *McCullen vs. Coakley* ruled Massachusetts’ thirty-foot fixed buffer zone unconstitutional but did not rule against all such zones, and in fact many communities across the nation have created them.

Caitlin Willenbrink, who represented the Kentucky Health Justice Network, objected to the intimidation and insults that patients seeking medical care must endure.

Pat Canon, a veteran clinic escort who also heads the escorts’ Legal Committee, was not given time to speak at the hearing but later sat down with me to discuss conditions on the sidewalk. She pointed out that the intent of a safety-zone ordinance was not to suppress the expression of ideas. In fact, the demonstrators have a large area on the sidewalk in which they can say whatever they like.

Rather, the safety zone would provide a refuge from behavior that sometimes rises to the level of stalking or assault. Canon emphasized that she and other escorts are not there to engage protestors or to express political views, but only to assist patients who are often upset and frightened by demonstrators who sometimes block their path, grab them by the elbow, shove them, and hit them with signs. These actions are misdemeanors, but in order to press charges patients would have to file a complaint, and most wish to avoid the publicity that this might entail.

What would the proposed safety zone look like? Canon’s ideal is a twenty-foot zone around the clinic. The American Civil Liberties of Kentucky has offered a more limited proposal: a rectangular zone eight feet wide that would extend from the street to the clinic entrance, allowing companions to drop off patients in a place where they could enter the clinic unobstructed.

Over the coming weeks, the Metro Council will decide whether or not to propose a safety zone, and if so in what form. Meanwhile the situation in front of the EMW clinic grows ever more stressful and potentially dangerous.

OSA, *Cont. from page 5.*

Were Saturday’s actions a test of Metro Louisville law enforcement officers, of Matt Bevin’s resolve to make Kentucky the first state in the Union without an abortion clinic, of the Trump Administration’s executive order on “religious freedom” as a protection for rescue missions and of the durability of the FACE Act?

OSA will be back in late July.

- 1Anti-Abortion Violence in America: The Stealth Terrorism. <https://www.adl.org/news/article/anti-abortion-violence-in-america-the-stealth-terrorism>. Accessed 5/23/17.
- 2No Greater Love: Historic Rescue Taking Place in Louisville, KY <http://www.standardnewswire.com/news/6777212467.html>. Accessed 5/26/17.
- 3Elija Ministries, Rusty Thomas’ Newsletter. <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Interposition-and-Rescue-at-the-Gates-of-Hell.html?soid=1102126637540&aid=hnMUG065kls>
- 4Abortion Opponents are- Winning War Against Clinic Access, Robin Marty. <https://www.damemagazine.com/2017/05/15/abortion-opponents-are-winning-war-against-clinic-access#sthash.XcTt7Aft.dpuf> Accessed 5/25/17
- 5The Descent of Anti-Choice Radicals on Louisville Is a Preview of Protests to Come, Jessica Mason Pieklo. <https://rewire.news/article/2017/05/15/anti-choice-radicals-louisville-preview-protests-come/> Accessed 5/25/17
- 6A Backdrop of Violence?: How Harassment of Abortion Providers Lays the Groundwork for Anti-Choice Terrorism. Miranda Blue, October 11, 2016. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/a-backdrop-of-violence-how-harassment-of-abortion-providers-lays-the-groundwork-for-anti-choice-terrorism/>
- 7 The Pulpit and Pen. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/a-backdrop-of-violence-how-harassment-of-abortion-providers-lays-the-groundwork-for-anti-choice-terrorism/>
- 8A coincidence or a strategy encouraged by the February visit? The Kentucky ACLU and EMW attorneys filed an emergency request in federal court to block the closure. In early April, the federal judge issued a restraining order to prevent the clinic’s closure while a federal lawsuit challenging the attempt to close the clinic is pending. The trial date is set for early September 6, 2017.
- 9 The Lesser Magistrate, Matt Trehwella, <https://lessermagistrate.com/lesser-magistrates-book/>. Accessed 5/25/17.
- 10 Threats and Violence Against Abortion Providers Has Skyrocketed, According to FMF Survey. feminist.org/blog/index.php/2017/02/14/threats-and-violence-against-abortion-providers-has-skyrocketed-according-to-fmf-survey/. Accessed 5/24/17.
- 11When Did the Right to Life Become the Right to Terrorize? <http://www.feminist.org/anti-abortion-violence/operation-save-america.html>. Accessed 5/24/17.



Caitlin Willenbrink of Kentucky Health Justice Network testifies at the hearing.



Pat Canon on the sidewalk

We thank Louis Moseson for providing many of the photographs used in this article.



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*David D. and Melanie P. are a
father/daughter team who work at
the KRCRC State Fair booth.*



Jenn S. at the State Fair booth.