

"Abortion really is a family issue, and it has to do with people making realistic and commonsensical decisions about what it means to be a parent." —Katha Pollitt

Voice for Choice

Newsletter of the Kentucky Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Winter 2020

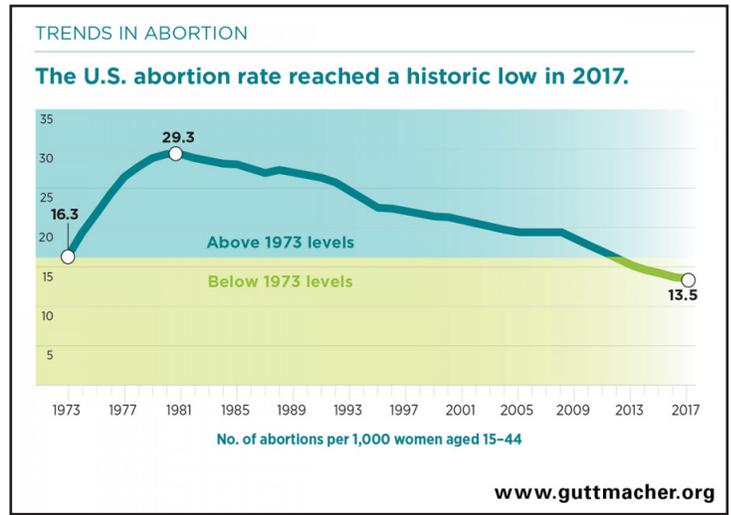
The Campaign to Ban Abortion: Is it Succeeding?

by Ann Taylor Allen

Ann Taylor Allen is editor of Voice for Choice

For almost forty years, anti-abortion activists and their allies—politicians, courts, clergy, media—have engaged in a campaign to ban abortion in the United States. This campaign, immensely costly in money, energy and time, has transformed the American political landscape and incited intolerance and extremism. Have these efforts been successful?

Certainly the anti-abortion movement has succeeded in blocking or complicating access to reproductive health care in ways that have been devastating to many individual patients and providers. A recent survey by the Guttmacher Institute confirms that the number of medical facilities that provide abortions throughout the nation has actually slightly



increased, but chiefly in the Northeast and West. In the South and the Midwest, new regulations have forced many

Cont. on page 6

Wayne's Words

by the Rev. Wayne A. Gnatuk,

Chair of Kentucky Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

You recently received KRCRC's annual fundraising letter. In it, I mentioned some of the big things underway in the KRCRC world.

Liz Tate has begun her work as KRCRC's half-time Field Organizer. She's helping us start two new chapters, one in Bowling Green and the other in a yet-to-be-determined location in eastern Kentucky.

Additionally, Liz is reaching out to faith communities on our behalf, inviting them to declare themselves as "Choice Faith Communities" who are committed to working for reproductive justice. Liz has written a column which appears in this newsletter on page four. If your faith community would like to meet with Liz, please contact her through info@krccrc.org.

Cont. on page 6

**Sunday
Jan. 26**

**Join KRCRC to
mark Roe v. Wade**

**An Interfaith
Reproductive
Justice Salon
at Waterfront
Botanical Gardens**

Event details on p.2

In commemoration of Roe v. Wade

An Interfaith Reproductive Justice Salon

**Sunday Jan. 26, 2020
6:30 p.m.
Waterfront
Botanical Gardens**

Featuring



Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson
Clergy in Residence,
Religious Coalition
for Reproductive Choice



1435 Frankfort Ave. in Louisville

What actions can people of faith and conscience take for reproductive justice today? Rev. Cari Jackson (our keynote speaker and a leader with national RCRC) will share her thoughts, as will other interfaith community leaders. **Poetry, music, and discussion** will round out our salon. Light refreshments will be provided.



**Kentucky Religious Coalition
for Reproductive Choice**

info@krcrc.org • www.krcrc.org

Care With Compassion

by Melissa Bane Sevier

Melissa Bane Sevier is a member of KRCRC's Lexington chapter.

Since its beginning, the RCRC has cared about people who are affected by reproductive decisions and loss. Beginning in 1999 RCRC began training clergy through the All Options Counseling Program. That program was designed to help clergy learn and use the skills of hearing and supporting those who had decisions to make.

As the organization developed, goals and plans morphed as well. Now the RCRC has developed a new program called Compassionate Care. It focuses on inspiring and equipping not only clergy, but also others: medical professionals, therapists, anyone who is in direct care or simply wants to explore the issues and how to be supportive.

RCRC has developed a new handbook for this training,

and sessions have already begun. We're planning one for Kentucky in the near future.

From the new handbook: The substance of what we do when offering compassionate care is companionship as they gather information and identify their options, choose a course of action that fits their (not our) values, resources and lifestyles, implement their decisions, and evaluate the practical and emotional results of their choices. Additionally, the very deep issues raised by reproductive issues/loss may induce people to seek the resources of their religious or spiritual beliefs.

This is one of the most important of RCRC's tasks. Thank you for supporting all those who are walking through important and sometimes difficult times.

Called to Action

by Heather Thum-Gerber

Heather Thum-Gerber is a student at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

I've opened a new chapter in my life as I began my first year of study at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in September. As I enter this new stage of my ministry, I can't help but feel called to confront the injustice that occurs all around us. In Kentucky, one form of injustice is in the area of reproductive rights. I have only lived in the state of Kentucky for three months and have quickly seen how abortion access and safety-zone policies compare to those in my home state of Michigan. I wouldn't say Michigan stands solidly for reproductive justice, but there are numerous clinics in the state as well as safeguards for doctors and patients. Compared to the conditions in Kentucky, Michigan seems like a haven.

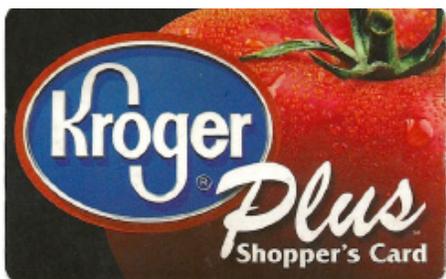
It was out of this realization that I saw a need for the seminary to not be a passive body. Within my first few weeks of classes, I found fellow students who also found themselves called to action, yet fearful of the backlash that

can swiftly come with the topic of abortion. From those conversations, the idea was born to stand in solidarity as seminary students for reproductive choice. We are a group in its infancy looking to the future, knowing full well the work before us is daunting. As of now, our group is made up of twenty students looking to be involved in a combination of escorting and advocacy. We are ready to come out and make it known that the future clergy among us will not stand by in silence out of fear.

As we partner with KRCRC, may we stand in solidarity and help bring about reproductive justice for those in our communities.



Heather Thum-Gerber



Do you shop at Kroger, with a Kroger Plus card? You can be giving KRCRC a financial boost, at no cost to you! Two simple steps:

1. Go to www.kroger.com/communityrewards. Create an account or sign in.
2. Follow the instructions to select an organization. KRCRC is #SU106.

Now you're ready to help KRCRC every time you shop! Just use your Kroger card (including at the gas pump), and KRCRC will receive a small percent of your purchases. Thank you!

Every One of Us Has Human Dignity

by Elizabeth Tate

Elizabeth Tate works as a field organizer for KRCRC. She aims to form new chapters and forge new links to organizations throughout Kentucky.

I was raised in a Presbyterian household but have spent much of my life immersed in Catholic spaces. I've attended Catholic schools since sixth grade and actively chose to attend Xavier University, a Jesuit college. Almost all of my extracurricular involvement in college was through the Center for Faith and Justice, and after graduation I did a year of service with Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

For years I have been attracted to religiously affiliated, justice-oriented spaces, but I have never felt connected to a "god" of any kind. I've essentially been a lifelong agnostic. I don't know if there is an actual higher power, a creator, a supernatural deity of some kind. And I don't really care if there actually is. The thing that attracts me to religion is not my belief in a deity: it's the teachings about how I should act and treat other people. Unconditional love, human dignity, and humility are at the core of my belief in the importance of reproductive justice and abortion rights.

Every single one of us has human dignity. It is the core of

who we are: a bright, shining thing within our souls that can never be tarnished, no matter what we do. It is why we have an endless capacity for good. We reach our truest fulfillment and deepest capacity for love when we become profoundly aware of our own dignity. When we feel free of judgment, we are able to recognize our own worth and our own holiness.

I've been a lifelong agnostic and have never really felt any connection to a higher power of any kind. But I believe very strongly in love. I know it's the only thing that matters in this life. 1 John 4:12 essentially sums up my feelings: "No one has ever seen God: but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."



Elizabeth Tate

We Won a Battle in Kentucky, but the War Goes On!

by Heather Bruner

Heather Bruner works as Donor Engagement Officer for Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky.

We did it!

On the night of November 5, 2019, the state of Kentucky voted out Matt Bevin, an avowed anti-choice governor who promised to do everything within his power to ban abortion across the commonwealth. For the first time in what feels like forever, the future of reproductive health services and abortion access in Kentucky feels hopeful.

Planned Parenthood's staff on the legislative side worked HARD to make this happen. The increasing support in our community for access to reproductive care encouraged Planned Parenthood Advocates of Indiana and Kentucky (PPAIK), a political action organization, to mobilize its members. In the past five years PPAIK has grown from 22,000 to more than 75,000 supporters in Kentucky. Planned Parenthood Action Kentucky mobilized this force to #BanBevin and knocked on 5,069 doors, made 39,616

calls, reached more than 154,000 people online, and held events across the state to take back control of our bodies and lives. Overall, we invested \$163,000 in in-kind expenditures. This is far more than we have ever been able to spend in Kentucky.

Planned Parenthood Kentucky's advocacy helped to turn out voters, empower our supporters and connect with communities. Each conversation held at a door or on the phone was an opportunity to take back the narrative that a conservative majority has pushed for far too long in Kentucky.

As we look forward, the immediate goal is for us to get both of our clinics licensed to provide abortions. We hope to start providing in Louisville as soon as February, and



Heather Bruner

Every Vote Counts Tremendously

by Beth Rich

Beth Rich works for KRCRC as Voter Engagement Organizer.

In the weeks leading up to the November 5th election, I, as KRCRC's Voter Engagement Organizer, worked alongside other KRCRC staff, board, supporters, and volunteers to initiate voter engagement activity within our organization. Politics can be daunting for any of us, and as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, KRCRC is required to go about engaging and connecting with voters in a non-partisan way. Using MapTheVote, a voter registration resource, we contacted 76 potentially unregistered voters. The week before the election, I sent daily emails to 1,446 KRCRC supporters, that were opened by more than two hundred people each day. Some of these numbers are small, but as I reflect on the higher-than-expected voter turnout (more than forty percent) and the close outcome of the governor's race, I am reminded that every vote—*every person*—counts tremendously.

In 2020, I am excited to increase these numbers and encourage reproductive rights advocates in Kentucky both to register and to vote in the coming year. Below are some ways that you can continue to engage in this work:

- Sign up for the KRCRC Voter Engagement newsletter. This form of communication will be more active around elections but is a great way to stay in touch with the political happenings we're engaging in and how you can get involved. Sign up at: <http://eepurl.com/gImsaT>.
- Connect with me personally. If you've got specific ideas about how you want to support voter engagement and reproductive justice with KRCRC, please reach out to me at votewithkrcrc@gmail.com.
- Help friends, family, and strangers register to vote. Create a (free!) account with MapTheVote at mapthe.vote and see who's unregistered in your neighborhood or community.



Beth Rich

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Dignity *Cont. from page 4*

our Lexington center will begin ramping up their services and staff development with the goal of adding abortion services as soon as possible. We already have doctors standing by to be our regular, in-state, on-site providers, and our legal team is wrapping up an array of lawsuits which should save us a great deal of time, money, and effort.

While we all have earned the right to celebrate the changes that are coming in Kentucky, the war on reproductive rights is far from over.

Electing a pro-choice governor here in Kentucky makes it clear that reproductive issues are front and center in the minds of the electorate. The more we show up, the more voters across the commonwealth will understand the part that Planned Parenthood plays in providing access to comprehensive reproductive health in their community.

Planned Parenthood needs your support now as much as ever. Kentucky still has an overwhelmingly anti-choice legislature, and the 2020 presidential election will be one of the most significant we have ever seen.

Year after year we are growing stronger. With your support we will continue the fight. We will not go back. We will not stay silent. We are Kentucky, and together we are unstoppable.

Contributions to our health or advocacy services can be made by contacting Heather Bruner at heather.bruner@ppink.org or by mailing your donations to Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky 842 S. 7th St. Louisville, KY 40203.



Abortion *Cont. from page 1.*

clinics to close, making reproductive care available only to those who are able to travel long distances.

Another anti-abortion strategy, of course, is to shame women who seek to terminate pregnancies. At the EMW Women's Surgical Center, now the state's only abortion clinic, all patients undergo ultrasound examinations. A state law (now blocked from enforcement) requires patients to see the ultrasound image, listen to a prescribed narration, and hear the fetal "heartbeat," even when patients refuse or providers believe patients will be harmed.

Has this assault on reproductive autonomy achieved its chief purpose: to reduce the number of abortions? Anti-abortion activists might point to a nationwide decline in abortion rates as proof that their efforts are succeeding. Indeed, this decline has been striking. According to the Guttmacher Institute's survey, the abortion rate (the number of abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44) fell by 20% between 2011 and 2019.

But do these statistics show that the anti-abortion forces have succeeded? In fact, they probably show the contrary. In general states that increased access to legal abortion showed steeper declines in abortion rates than those that restricted access. For example, between 2014 and 2017, the abortion rate in Kentucky, where access to the procedure had been reduced by the closing of one of its two clinics, fell by 9%, and in the South as a whole, where there have been many such restrictions, it fell by 6%. In California,

where access to abortion as well as contraception and comprehensive sex education has expanded, the rate fell by 16%. In the West as a whole, where there have been relatively few restrictions, it dropped 14%.

Nor did abortion rates decline because more women decided against terminations and carried their pregnancies to term. This would have pushed up birth rates, which in fact declined nationwide. An unknown factor may have been an increase in self-induced abortions using pills obtained online; these abortions were not reported.

So the strategy of the anti-abortion movement has failed. Freedom of choice, access to reproductive health care, and widely available contraception and comprehensive sex education are obviously much more effective ways to reduce the number of abortions than coercion and shaming. A decline in abortion rates is not an end in itself, for the procedure should be available to all those who need it. But everyone can be happy when unplanned pregnancies are avoided rather than terminated. Despite all the propaganda of the anti-abortion zealots, Americans are ever more determined that every child must be a wanted child.

For the full report, see Rachel K. Jones, Elizabeth Witwer, and Jenna Jerman, *Abortion Incidence and Service Availability*, Guttmacher Institute, September, 2019. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-incidence-service-availability-us-2017>

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Wayne's Words *Cont. from page 1.*

Beth Rich has also begun her work with KRCRC, serving as our Voter Registration and Get-Out-the-Vote Specialist. If you'd like to be involved in the next door-to-door voter registration effort, please be in touch with Beth. You'll find a column by Beth on page five of this newsletter.

We're also gearing up for our annual celebration of the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, and to advocate (and to encourage you to advocate) pertinent legislation when the Kentucky legislature comes into session in the New Year. We'll keep you apprised of the situation in Frankfort. In short, KRCRC is busier than we've ever been!

With reproductive rights under attack, we need you to stand tall with us. If you'd like to get involved as a volunteer with one of our Chapters (Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green, and a site TBD in eastern Kentucky),

please let me know. I can be reached at wagnatuk@outlook.com. There are many ways you can be helpful!

And, as always, we covet your financial assistance! Please do send a check to KRCRC. Thanks for all you do to further reproductive choice and justice here in Kentucky! We'll continue to count on you!

Peace with Justice,

Wayne A. Gnatuk
Chair, KRCRC Board of Directors



Rev. Wayne A. Gnatuk

ROSE ISETTI, 1934-2019

Defender Of Reproductive Rights

by Kate Cunningham

Kate Cunningham is president of the board of A Fund, Inc.

I think it must have been at KRCRC's *Roe vs. Wade* celebration in January 2009 at St. Matthews Episcopal Church where I posted a short notice that A Fund was looking for a new treasurer. A Fund's founder Robert Horner served as Treasurer from A Fund's origin in 1993 until the end of 2008. After the KRCRC program concluded, Rose Isetti approached me and said that she thought that being treasurer was something she could do. I nearly fell over in gratitude. After all, in an abortion fund, the treasurer plays the essential role.

Rose handled the treasurer's duties with care and diligence. She figured out Bob Horner's system and then made it her own, with some tweaks to update our systems. Rose served dutifully on the Board for years, recruiting another friend of hers to serve on the Board and often hosting meetings at her home. When Rose's health began to fail in 2012 she told us she could no longer continue as treasurer. We were doubly fortunate then to recruit Doug Deatz to this linchpin office.

We at A Fund knew Rose Isetti as our treasurer and as an outspoken defender of women's access to abortion and contraception. I have since learned of a few of her other skills--as an artist, gardener, chef and music critic (She

served on the committee for the Grawemeyer Award in Music Composition for many years!).

Rose's husband, Ampelio Isetti, shares her dedication to reproductive rights. For years he has been a familiar and much-beloved figure on the sidewalk where he escorts patients to EMW Women's Surgical Center.

Rose Isetti died August 26, 2019.



Rose and Ampelio Isetti, 2015
Courtesy of The Voice-Tribune

PPINK Announces Lobby Days for the 2020 Legislative Session

Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky (PPINK) has announced a new schedule for lobbying at the 2020 Legislative Session. PPINK will continue to hold "Throwback Thursdays (TBT)"—days when allied organizations will be invited to visit Frankfort and talk to legislators. However, this year the group is moving to a new model by reducing the number of TBT days to three: **January 23, February 13, and March 19.**

As usual, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Indiana and Kentucky will provide all the materials and training you will need to make your lobby day successful! For questions and information get in touch with Sara Hall Sara.Hall@ppink.org.

GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE

U.S. Abortion Patients

INCOME

75% poor or low income

RELIGION

62% religiously affiliated

FAMILY SIZE

59% already have a child

AGE

60% are in their 20s (only 12% are teens, of which 4% are minors)

RACE

39% White

28% Black

25% Hispanic

6% Asian/Pacific Islander

3% Other

guttmacher.org

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**Kentucky Religious Coalition
for Reproductive Choice**
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Religious Community in Support of an Individual's Right to Choose!



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KRCRC
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**HOLD THE
DATE:**



YOUR VOICE
is needed in
FRANKFORT!

**Thurs. March 19 is
Reproductive Rights
Rally Day**

STAY TUNED for details – we'll post on our Facebook page and email the details around.
(Do we have your email address?
Send it to info@krcrc.org so you won't miss out!)