

KAREN MULHAUSER

Dear Fellow Citizen,

I'm writing to alert you to an historic drama which is being played out in small towns and large cities all across the nation -- a drama which will end in tragedy unless we act now.

That drama involves the struggle between forces who would defend a woman's right to choose an abortion and those who would deny this right and impose their own religious beliefs instead. Many of our fellow citizens view the abortion issue as an issue of concern only to women. For this reason, they have decided not to get involved.

But, the fight over a woman's right to choose is more than a war between opposing beliefs. More than a battle between liberal and conservative ideologies. Indeed, this conflict is a test of whether our society will protect the rights of the individual to lead his or her own life, free of the dictates and dogma of others.

Throughout history, in every society respectful of individual freedom, there have been zealots who would destroy liberty and replace it with their dogma. Sometimes they take the path of politics and sometimes the path of force. But always their fanaticism leads to one conclusion -- you shall obey their will.

History is now repeating itself. This time the classical conflict between individual freedom and forced dogma is occurring around the issue of abortion. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right of a woman to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy and ever since then a force of religious vigilantes have tried to take away this right. Now they are succeeding.

Why, you ask, are they succeeding despite the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court? The answer is simple: they have frightened and intimidated our political leaders. They have badgered and cajoled, moralized and organized to the point that a majority of our elected representatives are now frightened to death by them. And with this fright comes an all too quick response to give in to their demands. Up until now, those of us who believe in individual liberty -- the vast majority -- have not taken a strong enough stand to effectively impress upon our legislators that they can disregard the fanatics with impunity.

Liberty can't be defended in the heart. The battle for liberty is won or lost at the polls, in the legislatures and in the courts. We can no longer consider the "abortion issue" as a narrow issue affecting only a few. We must unite and stand together against a menace which threatens all our liberties.

I do not use the word "menace" lightly. And when I tell you what is happening in our country, I think you'll agree.

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Step #1: While most of us remained passive, the fanatical minority of dogmatists and zealots organized to mount a legislative attack which would reverse the Supreme Court's historic ruling. While they have not yet succeeded in reversing the ruling, they have succeeded in limiting access to abortion. Today the poor -- the most powerless members of our society -- have been cut off from federal Medicaid funds for abortion. This legislative device known as the Hyde Amendment now deprives hundreds of women every day of the Medicaid assistance they need.

Despite the brave efforts of a number of members of the House of Representatives and Senate to overturn it, the Hyde Amendment still stands as a barrier to equal opportunity for poor women in desperate need.

And, once the anti-choice forces succeed in imposing their moral judgment on this most vulnerable class of women, they are one step closer to imposing the same judgment on all women.

Step #2: Next, the well-financed fanatics moved to impose their personal doctrines on the rest of us through other branches of government. In this last session of Congress, virtually every major appropriations bill had an anti-choice amendment attached to it by these zealots. I am sad to report that in the closing days of Congress the House decided to prohibit the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from studying or collecting any information about the "laws and policies of the Federal Government or any other governmental authority in the United States with respect to abortion."

In short, an intimidated Congress has told the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights -- an agency it established to protect individual rights -- that it can no longer do its job. Surely, a free society cannot remain free with this type of censorship where human rights and civil rights are involved.

And, just hours before the 95th Congress adjourned in October, Congress cut off funding of abortion procedures for military personnel, spouses and offspring in language that smacks of the Hyde Amendment.

Step #3: The insidious fanaticism does not end in the halls of Congress or in administrative offices in Washington. It is burrowing deeper and deeper into the fabric of our society. Now, they are carrying their cause and attempting to impose their will by direct action on those who can still afford an abortion.

- The fanatics, in a series of vigilante raids, have turned to vandalizing medical clinics and harassing patients. As I write this letter, more than 40 clinics have been attacked in a wave of fanaticism which threatens all our human rights. Your town could be next.
- The forces of anti-choice have succeeded in securing passage of a number of local "informed consent" ordinances aimed at

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discouraging all but the most courageous. These laws, now in effect in many communities across the nation, require a detailed and sometimes inaccurate and frightening explanation of the abortion procedure. The devastating effect of these laws on the young and the uneducated cannot be overstated.

- The fundamental right to privacy in medical matters is being breached by the anti-choice extremists daily. They have managed to gain access to the medical records of clinics and hospitals only to use the information in telephone campaigns to patients who have returned home following an abortion. Is there no end to their terrorism?

Step #4: What they can't do in Congress and through direct intimidation, they will attempt to do in other ways. The Supreme Court has declared that under our Constitution the right of an individual to choose an abortion cannot be abridged. The fanatics want that decision changed and the only way they can do that is through a Constitutional amendment. Consequently, they are rushing headlong to call a Constitutional Convention, the stated goal of which is to strip all women of their right to an abortion.

The ultimate outcome of any Constitutional Convention called by these zealots could have devastating consequences for the freedom of every citizen, men as well as women — consequences that go far beyond abortion.

The last time such a Convention was held was in 1787, when our present Constitution was written. But the delegates to a new Constitutional Convention won't be the founding fathers. They could be anti-choice right-wingers, who may seize the opportunity to go far beyond passage of a "human life amendment."

In theory, these delegates could not only do away with legal abortion and contraceptives, but they could also tamper with the Bill of Rights and any other part of the Constitution they chose to twist to their own purposes.

If you think that possibility is remote, you couldn't be more wrong. Momentum is gathering. Congress has already received resolutions from 15 states requesting that it call a Constitutional Convention to formulate an anti-abortion amendment. Upon the receipt of only 19 more resolutions, Congress is constitutionally bound to call such a Convention. And, remember, the purpose of this Convention will be to impose religious dogma on the rest of us — dogma which holds that a fertilized egg deserves the same legal protection as a person.

I hope you now realize why I am so concerned. Now is the time we must do something to protect abortion rights and to protect the growing threat against other human rights. The issue of abortion rights has become the focal point in a momentous struggle which will determine the fate of many basic rights and liberties.

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I urge you to lend your support today by making a contribution to or becoming a member of the National Abortion Rights Action League. For, it is through NARAL that I think we have the best chance of containing and stopping these zealots before their fanaticism spreads and contaminates the personal rights and individual freedoms of all Americans.

NARAL is the only national membership and lobbying organization which devotes 100% of its resources to preserving the right of a woman to choose. We are not "pro-abortion." The men and women who organized NARAL are pro-choice. We simply support a woman's right to decide. We are part of the overwhelming majority of Americans who believe that no one should be compelled to have an unwanted child.

If you are like most Americans, you may have become complacent about the liberty of choice you and your loved ones enjoy. But now that freedom is being threatened. Those who would take away that freedom are growing ever more vocal and ever more violent. They have but one answer: "YOU MUST HAVE THAT BABY WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!"

When members of any society remain passive in the face of zealots they soon find themselves prisoners of a system that has been captured and dictated by the fanatical few. I seek your support so that the dreams of these people may never become reality. Won't you join thousands of men and women who are already at work in this historic struggle -- citizens like Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, Alice Roosevelt Longworth and Gloria Steinem?

You could not participate in a more important cause. The health and safety of millions of women, rich and poor, who will seek abortions in the future, are at stake. Many other rights, including the right to contraception, may also be lost if the fanatics succeed in their frightening plan for a Constitutional Convention.

I ask you to send as much as you can in the enclosed envelope today. Tomorrow may be too late.

Sincerely,



Karen Mulhauser
Executive Director

P.S. When your contribution arrives, I'll see to it that you begin receiving the NARAL newsletter and other important bulletins designed to keep you informed of NARAL's progress including ways in which you can directly participate in this historic movement. But, please let me hear from you today.

Handwritten signature

MR. JOHN HENNIG

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