

# CWA Tackles Morning-After Pill in the States

By Pamela P. Wong

Before the South Dakota legislative session opened this year, Planned Parenthood (PP) offices in Sioux Falls and Rapid City came up with a gimmick. They offered free morning-after pills (MAPs—also known as "emergency contraception") on January 4.

The Sioux Falls office gave away 60 free samples, equal to what it usually sells in a month for \$26 each. Thankfully, South Dakota law still required that the women who got the free pills obtained a prescription first.

According to Linda Schauer, CWA's South Dakota State Director, PP planned the publicity stunt because the Legislature would be considering a bill to inform rape victims about the MAP. "Planned Parenthood's 'give-away' wasn't restricted to rape victims," Linda said. "It was simply a political ploy to gain more customers."

Mrs. Schauer testified before the Legislature, pointing out that the MAP not only stalls fertilization of the ovum but



Judy Smith - KS



Evalena Gray - MD



Linda Schauer - SD

also may prevent implantation of the tiny human. Thankfully, the South Dakota Legislature defeated S.B. 175, the fourth time in five years it rejected a MAP bill.

Until now, most attention on the morning-after pill has focused on the national level, where the abortion lobby is pushing to get the Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) to make the drug available over-the-counter. CWA's national office is working in Washington, D.C., to help the FDA remain firm in requiring a doctor's prescription for the drug.

However, as efforts in South Dakota show, Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and others are also working on a less visible front: state legislatures.

"The morning-after pill has become the No. 1 priority for abortion advocates," said Wendy Wright, CWA's President. "They lose legislation and elections when the topic is abortion, so they are going on the offensive and diverting attention to the morning-after pill.

"In response, our state leaders and volunteers have taken the research CWA has compiled and fended off some of the most well-funded and determined abortion advocates," Miss Wright said.

In addition to what happened in South Dakota, the Maryland Assembly killed a bill that would specifically make MAP available over-the-counter. In March testimony before the state assembly, CWA's Maryland State Director Evalena Gray said, "Studies-even those of MAP advocates-show that easy access does not reduce pregnancies or abortions. In England, STD rates skyrocketed. In Sweden, teen abortions increased. In Thailand, the most frequent buyers of the drug are men, who sometimes slip it to women without their knowledge."

Mrs. Gray also spoke out in the media, questioning the drug in an Associated Press article. Maryland lawmakers have rejected similar legislation in both of the last two years, and CWA of Maryland is preparing for another battle expected next year.

In Kansas, a proposal to inform women about availability of the MAP is, according to CWA's Kansas State Director Judy Smith, "going nowhere."

## The Morning-After Pill:

- is generally taken within 72 hours of intercourse to arrest conception or implantation of a fertilized egg;
- is a high dose of regular birth-control pills, which require a prescription and a doctor's oversight. Making it available without a prescription would remove these precautions for the women-and teens-who take it. The drug has not been adequately tested for use by adolescents;
- is generally marketed as "Plan B."
- Seven states have enacted laws that make the MAP available without a prescription: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Washington.

"I would never dispense it based on the scientific literature, not only because it can cause a mini-abortion, but because it has not been sufficiently tested for routine use by adolescents," said Mrs. Smith, who is a pharmacist. "Seven times the amount of hormones in the birth control pill taken indiscriminately certainly could pose a significant risk for susceptible women."

Currently, seven states have passed bills allowing nonprescription access. Keep an eye on what's happening in your state, and let your elected officials know that making the MAP available in this way increases the risk for women who take it.

*Pamela Wong is editor of Family Voice.*

For more information, visit [www.cwfa.org/hot-topics.asp](http://www.cwfa.org/hot-topics.asp), or call 1-800-323-2200 to request your copy of Talking Points on the Morning-After Pill by Wendy Wright. ■