

RELEASE IN PART B6

**From:** Neera Tanden <[redacted]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 28, 2012 10:32 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: NYT: Democrats See Benefits in Battle on Contraception Access

B6

Thanks for your note. I really appreciate your well wishes.

I am forwarding this story because I remember a meeting in the White House, I believe in 1998, in which you were pushing the women's groups to focus on contraception. I remember it well because it was my first women's group meeting. It took place in the Map Room in the run up to the anniversary of Roe v Wade. I believe you held these annually. Given what the right had done on partial birth abortion, you were pushing them to take on issues that exposed the right's extreme agenda, as they had tried to do to us w pba. And we lighted on the issue of contraception. We also told this story to Kelly Conlin at NYNaral because she pushed a contraceptive coverage bill in 2000 in NY. I say this because I was thinking of writing a piece on the contraception that would perhaps start with that story. My attempt would be to give you credit because I know of literally a thousand ideas you have scattered in the ground that have bloomed somewhere that you then may not receive credit for. And I would scrub it for an overly political edge.

My overall take would be that this is a realigning issue and would be very supportive of contraceptive coverage.

Let me know what you think. I'm happy to send it to you ahead of time. The market is a little saturated, so I'm not sure this will appear anywhere better than Bloomberg or TNR.

And on CSpan, if you had to be subjected to that at all, I hope you caught where I talked about how incredibly understanding you were of my mom duties - even during the campaign. I only say this because people really are moved by that. Rightly so because it was pretty extraordinary. And I thought other stories like that are important to get out as well.

Sorry to burden you with another overly long email.

Neera

**From:** Joshua Dorner  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 28, 2012 08:43 AM  
**To:** PR Core; PCCore; Health Legislative Strategy; Sally Steenland  
**Subject:** NYT: Democrats See Benefits in Battle on Contraception Access

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/us/politics/democrats-primed-for-contraception-battle-with-republicans.html?\\_r=2&ref=todayspaper](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/us/politics/democrats-primed-for-contraception-battle-with-republicans.html?_r=2&ref=todayspaper)

# Democrats See Benefits in Battle on Contraception Access

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER and HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — With the cameras running and the microphones on, Congressional Democrats express outrage over Republican efforts to limit the types of health care that

employers have to offer to their workers, particularly contraception. This is a fight Democrats are perfectly pleased to have.

As the issue of contraception access comes to the Senate this week, White House officials and Senate Democrats are increasingly hopeful that it will cut in their favor, believing that voters will conclude that Republicans are overreaching under the rubric of religious freedom.

Democratic leaders, who set the Senate floor schedule, plan to hold a vote this week on a measure offered by Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri, that would in effect reduce insurance coverage of contraception, by allowing religious institutions not to cover it in the health plans they offer employees.

Democrats see the vote as a way to embarrass Republicans — especially those up for re-election in moderate states like Maine and Massachusetts — and believe that the battle may alienate women and moderates from the Republican Party. Republicans need to pick up a number of seats to take back the Senate.

“They’ve gone way overboard in the mind of independents,” said Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, the No. 3 Democrat in the Senate, in a conference call with reporters, referring to Republicans generally. The fight over contraception, he said, “is going to do lasting damage” to the Republican Party.

But Republicans contend that the issue helps them politically because it highlights what they see as President Obama’s hostility to religious freedom. “Americans fundamentally understand that an attack on religious liberty by the federal government is an attack on our most basic, personal freedoms,” said Kevin Smith, a spokesman for Representative John A. Boehner of Ohio, the House speaker, “and Democrats risk alienating millions of Americans if they continue down this path.”

The Democrats’ confidence is a turnabout from a few weeks ago, when they had become worried that Mr. Obama might be alienating religious voters. Under pressure from Roman Catholic groups, he modified the policy, saying Catholic institutions would not have to pay for the birth control coverage or refer their employees to it. But they still must offer plans that cover contraception, with the insurance companies covering the direct costs.

Some polls show Americans about evenly divided over the issue of religious-based employers and contraception, while others have demonstrated an edge for Mr. Obama. In the latest New York Times/CBS News poll this month, 61 percent of those polled said they supported the Obama administration’s policy.

Mr. Blunt's measure would allow employers or insurance plans to exclude any provision that runs counter to their religious or ethical beliefs. The measure is in response to the Obama administration's change to a provision in the health care overhaul passed in 2010 that requires employers to offer preventive care, including free birth control.

But for many Republicans, the compromise did not go far enough, and several have signed on to Mr. Blunt's measure, saying that the Obama administration was not respecting religious freedom with its rule. House Republicans are weighing their own bill in response to the administration's rule.

The issue of women's health care in particular is resonating nationwide. State legislatures, largely those under Republican control, are revisiting their laws concerning insurance coverage, contraception and abortion. In Virginia last week, Republican lawmakers passed a bill that would force a woman to receive an ultrasound before having an abortion, as well as require doctors to ask whether she wanted to hear the fetal heartbeat and obtain a printed image of the fetus. But the governor has wavered on the measure.

Senate Republicans who support Mr. Blunt's bill say that they are not concerned with contraception per se, but with protecting religious freedom, a position they believe most Americans share. "This is not a women's rights issue," said Senator Kelly Ayotte, Republican of New Hampshire, during a recent news conference with Mr. Blunt. "This is a religious liberty issue."

In an op-ed article in The St. Louis Post Dispatch over the weekend, Mr. Blunt framed his amendment as a correction to the 2009 health care law, which made broader requirements on coverage. "We have a responsibility to project those liberties from government intrusion," he wrote, "and I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that the Obama administration's unlawful health care mandate is repealed as soon as possible and replaced with the common-sense reforms our health care system needs."

The White House press secretary, Jay Carney, on Monday called Mr. Blunt's legislation "dangerous and wrong," continuing a campaign to present the president's stance as measured and reasonable. While many Democrats, including Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., viewed Mr. Obama's initial position on the contraception matter as a political mistake that unnecessarily alienated Catholic moderates, the administration's compromise has won wide support from the party and liberal Catholics.

Mr. Biden now believes the president "has landed in the right place," one senior administration official said.

Stephanie Cutter, Mr. Obama's deputy campaign manager, said, "Red flags must be going up all over the Republican Party right now." She added: "If they're not, they should

be. Whether it's the Virginia ultrasound bill, wanting to give bosses control over female employees' health decisions, or the ongoing debates over 'personhood,' which places an outright ban on birth control, they're driving independent women away."

But lawmakers are on guard from either side. For instance, according to news reports, Representative Kathy Hochul of upstate New York was heckled at a town hall-style meeting last week over the issue and at least one attendee carried a sign that read, "Kathy, why have you betrayed our Catholic institutions?"

One White House official cautioned that should the debate devolve into shrill arguments, the net result would be the alienation of the independent or moderate voters whom Mr. Obama is trying to woo in his reelection bid. "Look, we don't want to overplay this either, so we'll be cautious," another White House official said.