

“This message will get women’s votes.”

“We’ve been waiting for this for a long time! I and countless other post-abortive women have been longing for someone to speak up for us. Pro-life politicians have never really understood how to talk about abortion’s devastation. This approach reaches out to post-abortive women and the millions who care about them.”

Theresa Bonopartis
Lumina Post-Abortion Referral Ministry

“Being a pro-life politician just got easier. Leaders who champion the rights of both women and the unborn are no longer playing defense. Instead, they’re making their opponents defend the indefensible.”

Congressman Steve King (R - IA)

“This brilliant strategy will break decades of verbal deadlock and help us all understand what women really want. It teaches public figures how to speak confidently and with sensitivity to post-abortive women. It’s an incredible guide to being radically pro-woman and pro-life.”

Theresa Burke, Ph.D.
Rachel’s Vineyard Post-Abortion Ministries

“Coerced abortion is common. Side-effects are serious. Death rates are high . . . Understanding women’s pain, and ending the dual carnage of abortion isn’t a moral compromise, it’s a moral mandate.”

Fr. Frank Pavone
Priests for Life

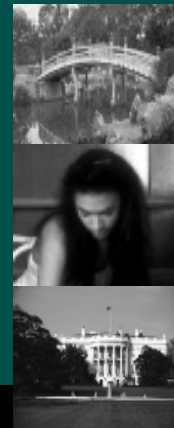
“As a woman who’s had an abortion, it’s not a legal or political issue for me; it’s a personal one. This little book provides the first real honest approach to the abortion issue. It moves past the tired cliches and addresses women’s real concerns. This will get women’s votes.”

Georgette Forney
Silent No More Awareness Campaign

Reversing the Gender Gap

- TOUCH THE HEARTS
- EARN THE TRUST
- WIN THE VOTES OF

**30 MILLION
POST-ABORTIVE WOMEN**



Elliot
INSTITUTE

Post Office Box 7348
Springfield, IL 62791
www.afterabortion.org

**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
FOR PRO-LIFE CANDIDATES**

Reversing the Gender Gap

- **TOUCH THE HEARTS**
- **EARN THE TRUST**
- **WIN THE VOTES OF**

**30 MILLION
POST-ABORTIVE WOMEN**

**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
FOR PRO-LIFE CANDIDATES**

Reversing the Gender Gap: Touch the Hearts, Win the Trust, Earn the Votes of 30 Million Post-Abortive Women: The Essential Guide for Pro-Life Candidates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• • •

Copyright © 2004 Elliot Institute

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Printed in Canada

Published by Acorn Books
An imprint of
Elliot Institute
P.O. Box 7348
Springfield, IL 62791-7348
(217) 525-8202

www.afterabortion.org
www.makingabortionrare.com

“Poor-Choice” is a trademark of the Elliot Institute.
Liberal use policies are posted at www.poorchoice.org

“Women Deserve Better” is a registered trademark of Feminists for Life.

Introduction

What You Must Know to Reverse
the Gender Gap v

Background Polls & Psychology

Women Dislike Abortion 9
Women Know Abortion
Doesn't Improve Their Lives 10
Americans Suspect Negative Abortion Effects
Are More Common and Severe Than We
Are Generally Told 11
Americans Know Abortion
Is Wreaking Havoc on Women's Lives 12
Coerced Abortions Are
“The Neglected Tragedy” 13
Americans Are Primed to Recognize the
Problem of Coerced Abortion 14
Helping Women Is Americans' Top Priority
When Voting 15
Conclusions
The Desire for Pro-Woman /
Pro-Life Champions 16

The Pro-Woman / Pro-Life Strategy

Properly Framing the Issue 19
A Two-Phased Campaign 20
Phase One
For Women, Against Abuse,
For Responsible Doctors 21
Phase Two
Abortion Hurts Women, Women Deserve
Better, Let's Create a Healing Environment . 22
What Post-Abortive Women Hear
in What You Don't Say 23
The Danger of Silence 24
A Political Case Study
The Compassionate Conservative
Who Wavered 24

Powerful Positions, Tactics, & Talking Points

Coerced Abortions = Domestic Violence	29
Unwanted Abortions	31
A Typical Example of Forced Abortion — Incest	31
Always Come Back to the Hard Cases	33
Dealing With Women Who Do Not Regret Their Abortions	33
Dealing With the Claim That Abortion Clinics Are Doing a Good Job	35
Confidently Affirm That Abortion Is Harmful to Women	35
Share What You’ve Learned From Post-Abortive Women You Know	36
Link “Pro-Choice” with “Poor-Choice”	37
Notes on When and How to Use the Poor-Choice Label	39
You Debate Your Opponent	39
A Legislative Agenda	41
Sample Speech Segments	42
A Sample of Questions and Answers	46

Staying Informed 50

References Cited 51

For More Information 52

INTRODUCTION

• • •

What You Must Know to Reverse the Gender Gap

At least one of every four women voters has had an abortion. For most, this is an ugly, painful memory. They’ve been there, done that, and hated it.

They know, first-hand, that the abortion industry has failed women.

This is why, contrary to popular misconceptions, the vast majority of post-abortive women don’t support the radical agenda of pro-abortion special interest groups. Instead, most would be glad to see abortion go away — but only if it can be done in a way that helps women. (Remember, they’ve been there. And they are deeply concerned about, and protective of, other women who face the same problems and pressures.)

Even more important, you must understand at least a few basic facts about post-abortion psychology. Since the Elliot Institute is the leading source of research and outreach materials on post-abortion issues, we can help you.

Here is perhaps the *most important point* to keep in mind:

Post-abortive women and men are keenly afraid of judgment and condemnation.

Unless told otherwise, perhaps repeatedly, post-abortive women are inclined to assume that if you knew their secret, you would shun or condemn them. Therefore, the most important message you need to convey to post-abortive women and men is that you truly do understand, accept, and care about them.

If you fail to neutralize this fear of judgment, post-abortive women and men, especially women, are more likely to lean toward the “pro-choice” candidate. Why? Because they hear in the “I’m pro-choice” rhetoric, “I don’t judge you, but my opponent does.”

That, in a nutshell, is the real source and cause of the gender gap.

All other variables being the same, post-abortive women are more sensitive to the abortion issue than are post-abortive men. They are less likely to vote for a pro-life candidate because pro-life politicians have traditionally failed to address post-abortive women's fears and needs and have allowed themselves to be portrayed as judgmental.

In this booklet, you will learn not only how to neutralize the fear that has created the gender gap, but also how to connect on a strong emotional level with the real concerns of post-abortive women. If you follow this strategy, *you*, the pro-woman/pro-life candidate, will become the much preferred choice over your *poor-choice* opponent.

If you follow this approach, there is no need for a political trade-off.

This approach will not lose your support from pro-life voters. It will actually strengthen it.

It will also strengthen your support from people who are fence-sitters on the abortion issue. They waffle between concern about the morality of abortion and a pragmatic desire to help women. They too will appreciate the morally sound, sensitive, and women-serving position you will be taking because this position clearly puts you on the double high ground—on the side of *both* unborn children *and* women.

There is one more advantage to this approach. You'll have more fun. You will no longer feel defensive when the abortion issue comes up.

Instead, your compassionate, common-sense approach to the abortion controversy will reveal that *you are the one who truly cares about women*, both before and after they have had abortions. Your opponent, by contrast, will be exposed as being less concerned about protecting women from coerced or dangerous abortions than he or she is about protecting the abortion industry's profits.

Bottom line: You are about to learn an approach to the abortion issue that makes you far more attractive to voters — regardless of how often or in what circumstances they believe abortion should be legal or not.

This new pro-woman/pro-life position will be of such strong appeal to voters, that it will become one of your favorite issues to address rather than

the one you dread. At the same time, as you are able to boldly, confidently, and compassionately address the real concerns of post-abortive women, your opponent will be left sounding evasive, insensitive, or confused.

Please read on, and you will see how polling data and human psychology confirm that this approach is *the* best way to align public sentiments around your pro-woman/pro-life message.

BACKGROUND POLLS AND PSYCHOLOGY

• • •

Women Dislike Abortion

A major poll of women's concerns commissioned by the pro-abortion Center for the Advancement of Women (CAW) in 2003 found that fewer than one-third of Americans (30 percent) believe abortion should be generally available. Fifty-one percent had a strongly restrictive opinion, with 17 percent favoring a total ban on abortion and 34 percent saying it should be allowed only in cases of rape or incest or to prevent the death of the mother.

CAW president Faye Wattleton, former president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, admitted that the poll confirms a steady decline of support for abortion among women. Indeed, the poll found that keeping abortion legal was the *next to last* most important priority for women.

Preventing domestic violence was the most commonly supported concern (92 percent), followed by equal pay for equal work (90 percent). By contrast, only 41 percent gave any priority to the goal of "preserving abortion rights." Having more time off work to care for family (74 percent); reducing drug and alcohol addiction (72 percent); and increasing women's study of math, science, and technology (66 percent) all garnered much more support than abortion.

While the CAW poll did not identify if respondents had actually had an abortion, other polls have shown that post-abortive women generally have a just as negative, or an even more negative, view of abortion. For example, in a *Los Angeles Times* poll:

- 74 percent of the women who admitted having had a past abortion described abortion as "morally wrong," and
- 81 percent agreed that women feel guilt after their abortions, even though most also believed that

women need to be allowed to make the decision themselves.³

Most post-abortive women are “pro-choice” only in regard to the fact that they are appalled that anyone would dare to stand in judgment over others, especially those who felt they had “no choice” but abortion because of the pressures they faced from others or their circumstances. When post-abortive women vote for a “pro-choice” candidate, they are not generally voting for abortion (which they personally know is an ugly experience); they are voting for acceptance.

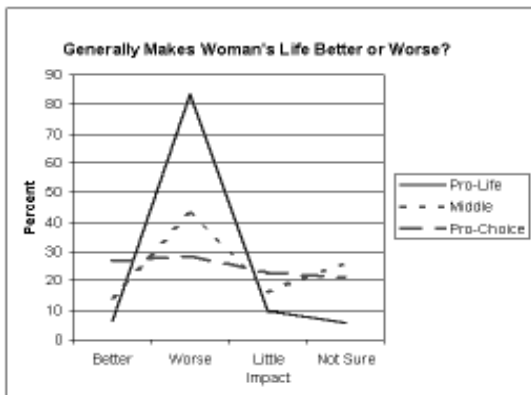
They’re not pro-choice; they’re anti-judgment.

Women Know Abortion Doesn’t Improve Their Lives

A national opinion poll commissioned by the Elliot Institute in December 2002 (± 4%) asked, “When a woman has an abortion, do you think it generally makes her life better, worse, or has little impact?” Overall, only 16 percent of Americans believe abortion generally makes women’s lives better and 52 percent believe it generally makes women’s lives worse.⁶

As seen in Figure 1, even when respondents are divided by how closely they identify themselves with the pro-life or “pro-choice” label, the most commonly held belief in each category is that abortion generally makes women’s lives worse. It is also notable that “pro-choice” women were 43 percent

Figure 1



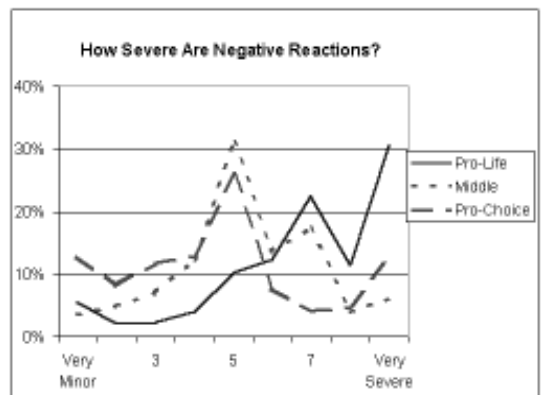
less likely than “pro-choice” men to believe that abortion improves a woman’s life, one of many indicators in the poll that women across all ideological groups have a more negative view of abortion’s impact than men. Also, the relatively high levels of uncertainty among the middle group and “pro-choice” group in response to this question suggests that the views of many in these groups would be strongly influenced by evidence of abortion’s harm to women.

Americans Suspect Negative Abortion Effects Are More Common and Severe Than We Are Generally Told

Asked how many women suffer emotional problems after an abortion, only 15 percent stated that emotional problems were rare or uncommon, 27 percent stated it was moderately common, and 59 percent stated it was very common.

Respondents were then asked to rank the severity of emotional problems following abortion, when they do occur, on a scale from 1 to 9. Overall, only 20 percent believed emotional problems were relatively minor (1-3), 42 percent believed the problems were moderate (4-6), and 38 percent believed they were severe (7-9). The breakdown by political ideology is shown in Figure 2. Those who identified themselves as “strongly pro-choice” or in the middle were most likely to anticipate that the negative emotional effects are moderately severe.

Figure 2



Pro-lifers were most likely to consider the effects very severe.

Another question in the survey (not shown in graph form) revealed that most people (74 to 90 percent) believed abortion clinics do not fully disclose the emotional risks of abortion to women. Even among the most “pro-choice” respondents, only a minority believed that clinics give very complete counseling about the emotional impact of abortion to their patients.

Americans Know Abortion Is Wreaking Havoc on Women’s Lives

The Elliot Institute poll shows that even though the media have ignored a large number of studies documenting physical and psychological complications associated with abortion, most people, and especially women, are still inclined to see abortion as a harmful experience. It is most likely that this negative view is largely based on personal experience or observations of the abortion experiences of friends and loved ones. If the public is further educated about the risks of abortion in the context of political debates, it is likely that these negative attitudes would be even further strengthened.

Pro-abortion “experts” can swear up and down that abortion is safe, but the public will know this is posturing. Too many people now have some personal experience with abortion or post-abortive women. They know abortion is an ugly experience. They know it is haunting people’s lives.

This is why you shouldn’t be afraid to simply assert, and even assume, that “as everybody knows,” abortion is wreaking havoc in women’s lives. Most voters will find such an assertion far more credible than the claim that abortion always helps women.

Moreover, you do not have to assert that abortion *always* hurts women. You only need to assert that it hurts some women, and your concern for this group of women is enough to arouse your compassion.

A good tag line to use when speaking about abortion is simply this: **“Abortion isn’t a safety net; it’s a safety hazard.”**

Phrases such as this will arouse and reaffirm the

average listeners’ assumptions that abortion isn’t truly helping to improve women’s lives. It reinforces and builds on the commonly held view that abortion is fraught with negative side effects that can plague women over many years.

Coerced Abortions Are “The Neglected Tragedy”

How many political candidates would be willing to publicly defend forced abortions? None — yet 30 to 60 percent of all abortions are primarily the result of women submitting to the demands of boyfriends, husbands, parents, employers, doctors, or other people with influence over their lives.³

Making it easy for women to get a legal abortion has also made it easy for others to pressure women into unwanted abortions. If given support and encouragement to have their children, the vast majority of women having abortions would choose to give birth. Instead of receiving support, however, many find that they are encouraged, pushed, badgered, or even threatened until they give in to an abortion. In some cases, women have been assaulted and even murdered by their partners for refusing to have abortions.

In general, the pro-life movement has done a *terrible* job of focusing public attention on this problem. It is incredible that the pro-life movement has failed to make this a centerpiece issue.

Coerced abortions reveal the shallowness of the “pro-choice” rhetoric that simply assumes that every woman is freely choosing an abortion according to her own conscience and maternal desires. In fact, at least 70 percent of aborting women admit they are violating their moral beliefs and maternal desires.³

Moreover, if abortion providers were held liable for properly screening women for any evidence of coercion, abortion rates would be dramatically reduced.³ Shouldn’t this be a pro-life priority, then? Wouldn’t the public rally around laws that would protect women from *unwanted abortions*? And wouldn’t you like to see your opponent explain to the public why he or she opposes a law that would protect women from being pressured into unwanted abortions?

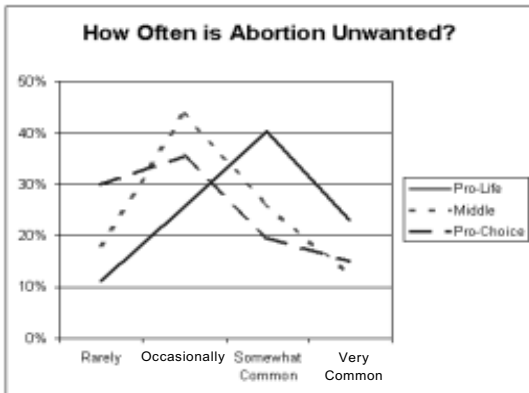
Americans Are Primed to Recognize the Problem of Coerced Abortion

Even though coerced abortions are not yet a major public issue, our Elliot Institute poll has shown that the public is already aware of this problem. It may not be an issue at the top of their minds, but when asked how often women feel “pressured by other people or circumstances to undergo unwanted abortions,” only 20 percent said this was rare, while 46 percent said it was common or very common. Figure 3 shows the breakdown by ideological association.

This data shows that the general public is inclined to believe and share your concerns regarding unwanted abortions, if you will simply call their attention to the problem.

Remember, also, that the CAW survey found that women are far more concerned about preventing domestic violence than they are about protecting unrestricted access to abortion. As will be discussed later, coerced abortions are a form of abuse and domestic violence. By linking these together, you will be able to more easily align public support around proposals that will protect women from unwanted abortions.

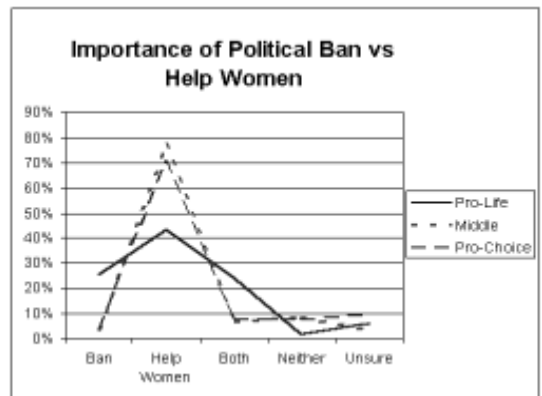
Figure 3



Helping Women Is Americans' Top Priority When Voting

In the Elliot Institute poll, a nationally representative sample was asked, “Which are more important, political efforts to ban abortion or service programs that present women with alternatives and support those who suffer emotional problems after abortion?” Overall, 76 percent believed helping women was more important or equally important (answering “both”). The breakdown by ideological self-identification is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4



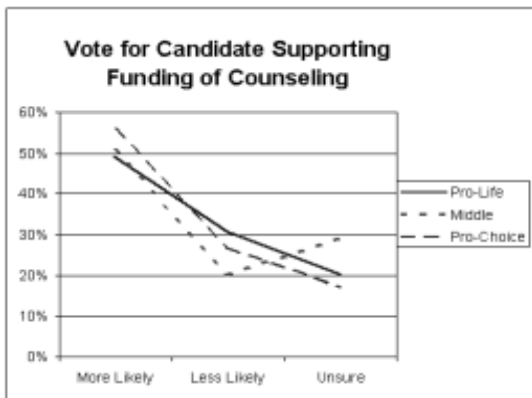
In addition, when asked if they would be “more or less likely to vote for a candidate who calls for government support for grief counseling programs to assist women who experience emotional problems after an abortion,” 52 percent said they would be more likely to vote for such a candidate (see Figure 5 on the next page).

This position was especially attractive to “pro-choice” women, of whom 63 percent stated they would be more likely to vote for such a candidate compared to only 46 percent of “pro-choice” men.

In this and other areas, our polling indicates that women are generally more responsive to this pro-woman strategy than men. This probably reflects that women, either through their own experience or through their observations of abortion’s impact on friends, are more likely to be aware of and concerned about negative reactions to abortion.

In addition, when asked how important more research on women’s emotional reactions to abortion is, 74 to 81 percent stated it should be a medium to high priority. This finding again reflected broad support for government involvement in ways that protect, educate, and serve women. It also shows that women want to know more. They want to know what the true risks of abortion are to them and their loved ones.

Figure 5



Conclusions

The Desire for Pro-Woman / Pro-Life Champions

What do all the polls and focus groups and the insights of post-abortion counseling experts reveal?²

- Women don’t like abortion.
- Most believe abortion frequently results in moderate to severe psychological problems.
- They are not concerned about packing the Supreme Court with pro-abortion justices.
- They are concerned about women who are abused and pressured into unwanted abortions.
- They are concerned about promoting post-abortion healing and better alternatives to abortion.
- They, like most people in the middle majority, would be glad to see abortion rates decline as long as this goal is achieved in ways that advance the welfare and rights of women.

It is not the goal of ending abortion that bothers most post-abortion women. Most would agree that in a perfect world abortion would not exist. What most offends them is that anti-abortionists *appear to be insensitive to the plight of women.*

What they really want is for women to receive help, compassion, and understanding, before they are pregnant, when they are pregnant, and after they are pregnant — whether the pregnancy ended in childbirth, miscarriage, or an abortion.

Like everyone else, post-abortion women want to be liked and accepted — not judged. They even want to be liked and accepted by their political representatives.

This is especially true of post-abortion women who are struggling with their own internal sense of shame and guilt. They are inclined to believe that anyone who is against abortion is against them, ready to accuse them of evil and to remind them of the most private and painful experiences of their lives.

The last thing post-abortion women need is a president, senator, or representative who will dump more guilt and shame on them.

Conversely, post-abortion women would love to support a president, senator, or representative who wants to protect women from being pressured into unwanted and dangerous abortions, and who would promote healing for those who are already suffering from post-abortion problems.

Feminists for Life has captured the sentiments reflected in these polls in their slogan, “Women Deserve Better™.” This slogan reflects what most women truly believe. Women who need support from their partners, family, and community are instead being offered abortions — the “easy way out” for everyone but the physically and emotionally scarred woman, not to mention her unborn child. Abortion is a poor choice, and women deserve better.

THE PRO-WOMAN / PRO-LIFE STRATEGY

• • •

Properly Framing the Issue

The abortion debate has typically been framed as a conflict between the rights of women and the rights of unborn children. Abortion supporters have consciously defined the issue in these terms in order to polarize public opinion.³

Unfortunately, this “woman versus fetus” framework is actually reinforced by pro-life politicians who argue that the right to life of the unborn child is more important than the woman’s “right to choose.” While one can offer philosophical or theological defenses for this view, this is a losing political argument for two reasons. First, it will be seen as an admission that the issue can be properly framed as a conflict of rights. Second, if there is a conflict of rights, many people will choose to give precedence to the women they see.

It is a serious mistake to accept this definition of the debate.³ Instead, pro-woman/pro-life politicians must adamantly insist that there is no real conflict between the best interests of women and their unborn children. God has intertwined the rights and best interests of both. To help one, we must help both. To hurt one is to hurt both. This is why we are against abortion — because it hurts, violates, and destroys the lives, dignity, and well-being of *both* mothers and their unborn children.

To properly frame the political debate, we must insist that the true nature of the abortion conflict is between the rights and well-being of mothers *and* their unborn children, versus the profits of the abortion industry and the population controllers who are exploiting them. One of our core messages must be:

Abortion hurts women, children, and families, and we’re the ones who care.

In this context, you should consider putting your

poor-choice opponent on the defensive. Your general position and challenge boils down to this:

Women deserve better than abortion. This is how I'm going to help them. What are you going to do to stop unwanted, unnecessary, and dangerous abortions?

Reframing the abortion debate in this way is not difficult. But it does require pro-life politicians to become familiar with new facts, arguments, and media "sound bites." This booklet is designed as the first stage primer for helping you to do that. For more complete details, see the book *Making Abortion Rare*.³

Keep this proper framework in mind at all times.

You are on the side of both women and their children. You are protecting both from the abuse of abandonment and lies that leads to countless unwanted and dangerous abortions for the benefit and profit of others.

This general theme must come through in everything you say and do. In order to break through the attempts of your opponent or the media to pigeon-hole you as preferring the rights of the unborn child over the rights of women, you must be aggressively pro-woman. The following will help you to tap into the underlying public sentiments discussed in the previous section in order to make you the *much preferred* pro-woman candidate.

A Two-Phased Campaign

People can only absorb a few ideas at a time. So we have divided the most important themes for a pro-woman/pro-life campaign into two phases. Each phase has an emotional, factual, and public policy element.

In the early phase of raising public awareness about these issues, you may want to stick just to the themes described in Phase One. Repetition of these important themes is extremely important. This will also help you to master the ability to convey these messages in a powerfully moving, compassionate way.

As the public becomes familiar with the messages from the first phase, either because of your efforts or that of other politicians or pro-woman/

pro-life groups, you can move on to the second phase. During the second phase, you should still mention and reinforce the messages from the first phase, at least in some way, but you may not need to elaborate on them to the same degree.

Please note that the messages described for each phase describe the theme, not necessarily the actual wording. Additional, and sometimes better, wordings are presented in the last section of this booklet, which also addresses other themes that can be developed as this issue matures in the public mind.

Phase One

For Women, Against Abuse,
For Responsible Doctors

These are the most important, foundational messages of all. It is especially important for you to become thoroughly imbued with the Phase One messages, as you will find occasions to come back to them time and again.

Phase One Emotional Connection

"I understand the pressures that lead women to choose abortion. I understand the feelings of abandonment, isolation, and grief that follow an unwanted abortion. I truly care about helping women who feel they have no choice but to have an abortion, and I truly care about those who are trying to put their lives back together after an abortion."

Phase One Factual Context

Thirty to 60 percent of all abortions are the result of women being pressured into unwanted abortions by their boyfriends, parents, doctors, or others. Because of these pressures, thousands of women having abortions every day are doing so in violation of their moral beliefs against abortion. Forced abortions are a form of domestic violence. Abortion clinics are failing to protect women from this terrible form of abuse.

Phase One Public Policy Position

No woman should ever feel pressured to submit to an unwanted abortion. Abortionists should be required to put the welfare of women ahead of their profit margins. If they fail to screen for coercion, or

to protect women from being pressured into unwanted abortions, they should be held liable for the wrongful deaths of these women's wanted children.

Phase Two

**Abortion Hurts Women, Women Deserve Better,
Let's Create a Healing Environment**

Phase Two Factual Context

Millions of women have been hurt by abortion: physically, psychologically, and socially. Victims of coerced abortion are haunted by grief and shame. Abortion is linked with higher rates of depression, suicide and substance abuse. Abortion complications go even beyond injuring women; they also hurt their loved ones. Unresolved abortion trauma is hurting marriages and families. Abortion increases the risk of premature births, which are the leading cause of death and disability among newborns.

Phase Two Emotional Connection

“Whenever a woman becomes pregnant, she deserves support and encouragement, not criticism or abandonment. Most women would never want an abortion if they were given the support they deserve. Every abortion is a sign that we have failed to give women the support they deserve to bring their children into the world. Abortion is a poor choice and women deserve better.”

Phase Two Public Policy Position

We need to create a more healing environment for those who are suffering from post-abortion grief. We need to support more post-abortion counseling programs and more research to better understand abortion complications and treatments. We need to better understand the pressures that lead women to think abortion is their only choice and to offer them better alternatives. Women deserve better.

What Post-Abortive Women Hear In What You *Don't* Say

Everyone knows abortion is an emotionally charged, divisive issue. This is precisely why most political candidates prefer to avoid it.

Traditional political thinking is that no matter what position a candidate takes on abortion, it will alienate as many voters as it attracts. According to this traditional political thinking, pro-life candidates are advised to minimize their public statements on the abortion issue unless they are in a strongly pro-life district. This traditional view, however, fails to address the underlying emotional issue associated with abortion: “Are you judging me? Are you on my side, or against me?”

As discussed in the section on “Background Polls and Psychology,” most post-abortive women think abortion is a rotten choice and an ugly, damaging experience. In general, they dislike the radical pro-abortion agenda. They have no interest in packing the courts with pro-abortion judges. They don't support expanding government funding of abortion. They support informed consent laws and alternatives to abortion.

Most post-abortive women see themselves as “pro-choice” by default, not by ideology. They see abortion as an “evil necessity” which came into their lives at a time when they felt they had few, if any, other options. They don't want to be judged, so neither do they want to judge other women. This is one of the key reasons why they tend to feel more comfortable with the rhetoric of “choice.”

But the real issue isn't about “choice.” It's about shame.

Everyone has a fundamental human desire to be liked and loved — preferably by everyone in the whole world! Post-abortive women are no different.

This desire for acceptance is both heightened and frustrated in post-abortive women who are struggling with their own internal sense of shame and guilt. They need extra assurances of understanding and love because they feel unworthy of it. They are also inclined to believe that those who are against abortion will also be against them, ready to accuse them of evil and to remind them of the most private and painful experiences of their lives.

The last thing post-abortive women need is a president, senator, or representative who will aggravate their feelings of guilt and shame by condemning abortion in a way that implies condemnation of post-abortive women.

The Danger of Silence

Whether by insight, luck, experience, or desperation, pro-abortion candidates have learned to use this psychological dynamic to their advantage. In very close races, pro-abortion candidates stop avoiding the abortion issue. Instead, they will begin to vigorously campaign on a “pro-choice” platform in defense of “women’s rights.”

This tactic has been effective in shifting the votes of 30 million post-abortive women toward the “pro-choice” candidate for one simple reason. Even though these women are not generally concerned about protecting or expanding “abortion rights,” they are deeply invested in protecting *public acceptance of women who have had abortions*.⁷

When a post-abortive woman hears a politician say, “I’m pro-choice,” her first thoughts are not in regard to public policy. Her first thoughts are in regard to acceptance.

The real power of “pro-choice” political rhetoric is in what it implies: “I’m on your side. I don’t judge you. But my opponent does.”

Please reread that last part. “My opponent *does* judge you.” This is the emotion generated by “pro-choice” campaign efforts that actually shifts votes. These votes are swung not by promises to appoint pro-abortion Supreme Court judges, but by promises of acceptance and, conversely, by the women’s fear of condemnation.

A Political Case Study

The Compassionate Conservative Who Wavered

A prime example of this dynamic occurred in the Bush versus Gore presidential campaign. Early in the campaign, the polls showed Bush had high marks from women who were attracted to his “compassionate conservative” image.

To pull women into his corner, Gore began hit-

ting the “I’m pro-choice” message hard. Bush hoped to avoid losing women’s support by following the traditional advice given to pro-life candidates: Say as little as possible about the abortion issue. Reassure pro-lifers that you are pro-life, then shut up.

Bush’s failure to directly address the concerns of post-abortive women meant that Gore’s message of acceptance went unchallenged. The more women heard that Gore was on their side, without any response from Bush, the more they began to fear that Bush was not truly a “*compassionate* conservative.” Bush’s silence left them to conclude that he really was the judgmental, condemning, out-of-touch-with-reality conservative that Gore and the media were portraying him to be.

Now, imagine you are a 30-year-old woman who had an abortion when you were 15 because your parents threatened to throw you out if you didn’t. You’re trying the best you can to build a good life for yourself and your family. But all your old anger boils up when you feel that self-righteous know-it-alls are pointing their fingers at you. After all, doesn’t everyone make mistakes?

Now, from that perspective, how would you have reacted if then-governor George W. Bush had said the following during the presidential debates?

I’m pro-life. I’m also pro-woman. And I’m deeply concerned about women who are being hurt by unnecessary, unwanted, and dangerous abortions.

From my friends and relatives who have had abortions, I’ve learned that abortion isn’t a safety net, it’s a safety hazard.

Sadly, many times women find themselves in positions where they feel they have no other choice but to have an abortion. That’s not “pro-choice;” that’s “no choice.”

I share the anger of women who have been pushed into unwanted abortions by their boyfriends, husbands, parents, or others.

I know that in most cases these other people did not understand how deeply it would hurt them for the rest of their lives. But it is still gravely wrong to encourage a woman who needs support from her loved ones to have

an abortion instead.

I want to work on behalf of women so that no woman ever feels that she has no choice but to submit to an unwanted abortion because of circumstances or pressure from others.

We need to protect girls from being bullied or blackmailed into abortion by authority figures, or worse yet, physically forced to abort.

We need to support counseling programs for women who have already had abortions and are struggling with grief, guilt, shame, substance abuse, or any of the other emotional baggage related to a past abortion. Many of them were just kids at the time — often abused, parentally neglected kids. Others were battered and ill-informed.

Perhaps most important, we need to be less quick to assume culpability and, in any case, less judgmental. We've all made mistakes, and we have all needed the support of our friends, families, churches, and communities to recover.

We also need to be less quick to assume that abortion is a cure-all. My poor-choice opponent wants the government to be involved in funding more abortions. That's not promoting "pro-choice." That's promoting a "poor-choice."

I believe women deserve better. And I'm going to work to ensure they are offered better. And for those who have already had abortions and need post-abortion counseling and support, I'll work to see they get it.

These hurting women are our friends, daughters, mothers and wives. They deserve our love and support. We need to work harder to help women avoid abortion, and when necessary, to find healing after abortion.

What a breath of fresh air! If you were that hurting, defensive post-abortive woman described above, wouldn't this response have relieved your fears that this "compassionate conservative" was poised to judge and condemn you? Wouldn't you have been thinking, "This candidate really does

care about me!"?

The post-abortive women and counselors who have read and helped to prepare this booklet all agree that if George Bush had consistently addressed abortion in such a way, the term "hanging chad" would still be an obscurity.

We believe that such a speech could have resulted in a shift in votes of at least 10 percentage points among the 30 million post-abortive American women, and probably much more. In addition, such a pro-woman emphasis would also have a positive effect on the middle majority of Americans, who are deeply ambivalent about the abortion issue but mostly concerned about helping women. They too would welcome proposals to reduce or eliminate abortion, *as long as it can be done in a way that helps women.*³

POWERFUL POSITIONS, TACTICS, & TALKING POINTS

• • •

Coerced Abortions = Domestic Violence

As discussed in the section on “Background Polls and Psychology,” American women are far more concerned about stopping domestic violence than they are with promoting abortion. Therefore, when you link coerced abortions to domestic violence, you are now addressing the highest rated “women’s issue,” according to the CAW survey.

Abused women will instantly recognize this link, and non-abused women will instantly recognize that this link is credible.

Research has shown that when an abusive male partner is unwilling to accept or tolerate the birth of a child, the woman may become the victim of verbal or physical abuse aimed at compelling her to submit to an unwanted abortion.⁸

According to one study of battered women, the target of battery during their pregnancies shifted from their face and breasts to their pregnant abdomens,⁹ which suggests hostility toward the women’s fertility.

Women are literally being killed for refusing to abort.

The leading cause of death during pregnancy is homicide.¹⁰ In one study of violent deaths among pregnant women, three out of every four were killed during their first 20 weeks of pregnancy.¹¹

The following is just a partial list of some of the murders we have documented in our files that have occurred because the victims refused to have abortions. As you can imagine, for each woman killed, thousands more have been physically or verbally abused, and many have submitted to the demand for an abortion.

- In Florida, Joseph Peck was found guilty in Sept. 2003 of the murder of his wife Jennifer, who was four months pregnant, because she refused to have an abortion.

- In Charlotte, North Carolina, 24-year-old Cherica Adams died a month after being shot four times in the stomach in Nov. 1999. Her eight-month-old unborn son survived. Rae Carruth, a former NFL player, was sentenced to 18 years in prison for plotting Cherica’s death because he didn’t want to pay child support.
- 16-year-old Matthew Wiedeman pleaded guilty to killing Stephanie Burnett in April 2002 and was sentenced to life in prison. Police said Wiedeman believed Stephanie was pregnant and he didn’t want her to have the baby. An autopsy showed she was not pregnant.
- Shawn Kristopher Holliman, 21, was sentenced to life in prison for killing 17-year-old Tanika Fox with a shot to the head at her Greensboro, North Carolina, apartment in Dec. 1999. Police said he killed Tanika because she refused to have an abortion and he didn’t want to pay child support.
- Sonya Hayes was shot in the stomach, killing her and her unborn son. Her boyfriend, Terrance Davis, was sentenced to life in prison for her murder. At his trial, a woman testified that Davis had threatened to kill Sonya’s unborn child.
- In Oklahoma, Shawn Lawrence was charged in Aug. 2003 for attacking his ex-girlfriend, Erin Gardner, in an attempt to cause a miscarriage. Erin was pistol-whipped, robbed, and repeatedly kicked in the stomach.
- A pipe bomb killed Deana Mitts, who was seven months pregnant, along with her seven-year-old daughter Kayla, in their Pittsburgh town home on New Year’s Day 1999. Deana’s ex-boyfriend, Joseph Mienerd, was sentenced to life in prison for the bombing. Mienerd had threatened to kill Deana when she refused to have an abortion.

The biggest factor leading women to have abortions is lack of support from their male partners. Withheld support, encouragement to abort, demands for abortion, threats, and violence are all methods on a spectrum of ways in which men pressure women to abort unborn children — children that women are willing to welcome but whom their male partners reject.

Do not be afraid to assert that domestic violence is one of the leading causes of unwanted

abortions. It is most certainly true and will ring true with the victims of domestic violence and with women in general.

Unwanted Abortions

Use the phrase “unwanted abortions” often. Your goal of stopping “unwanted, unnecessary, and dangerous abortions” will be hard to dismiss.

As noted previously, even while this issue has been off the radar screen, the public is already inclined to believe that coerced abortions are a common occurrence.

Further, since unwanted abortions are so common, the fact that you express an understanding of why women abort — even against their consciences and maternal desires — will strongly connect with those post-abortive women who fit that profile. They will love you for caring, for understanding, for taking their side, and for working to spare other women what they have been through.

This is a no-brainer. Always, always, always express your concern for stopping “unwanted abortions.”

“The real crisis in this country is not unwanted pregnancies; it’s unwanted abortions.”

Note, the phrase “unwanted abortions” will even resonate with many women who freely consented to their abortions, yet deeply believe that it was a negative, unwanted experience.

Moreover, by repeatedly using these words, you will help to embed the phrase “unwanted abortions” into the national lexicon, which in turn reinforces the public’s perception that abortion is an “unwanted” thing.

A Typical Example of Forced Abortion — Incest

Some poor-choice advocates will insist that women aren’t being forced to have abortions, they’re just exercising their free choice. This is where you should be ready with a hard-case example of how the abortion industry conspires with abusers.

A common example is when an abortion clinic performs an abortion on the 14-year-old victim of a 31-year-old sexual predator. The predator insists

on the abortion, accompanies the girl to the clinic, and pays for the procedure. The abortionist not only complies, but doesn't report the statutory rape to authorities. So the abuse continues and the predator may even move on to other victims.

Incest victims are especially likely to be forced into unwanted abortions.⁴ For example, "Denise Kalasky" became pregnant during the course of a series of incestuous rapes by her father. When she became ill, doctors discovered she was pregnant. To cover his own crime, the father accused his daughter of being promiscuous and demanded an abortion. When Denise refused for moral reasons, the attending emergency room physician refused to do the procedure. The father demanded that the local abortionist be called.

Within one hour, this man arrived at the hospital, talked with my parents and decided to do the abortion, without speaking to me. I refused and tried to get off the examining table. He then asked three nurses to hold me while he strapped me to the bed. . . [and] prepared to kill my baby. I continued to scream that I didn't want an abortion. He told me, "Shut up and quit that yelling!" Eventually, I was placed under general anesthesia and my child was brutally killed.

I was told that an abortion would solve my problem, when it was never really the problem in the first place.

I was told, "Your parents know what's best," when they obviously were only concerned about their own reputations.

I was told, "You made the right decision," when I was never given a choice. More important, where was my baby's choice?

I grieve every day for my daughter. I have struggled to forget the abuse and the abortion. I can do neither. All I think of is, "I should have done more, fought more, struggled more for the life of my child."⁴

If you don't defend young girls like Denise, then who will? Feel free to share her story on the campaign trail.

Always Come Back to the Hard Cases

The professional team of abortion advocates and lobbyists always retreats to the hard cases of rape and incest, and threats to the health of the mother. (The former is especially ironic since abortions for incest victims are almost always the result of coercion and return the incest victim to her abuser.)

Learn a lesson from them.

If you are ever in a tight spot, or at a momentary loss about how best to respond to a question or issue, come back to the need to protect women from being pressured or coerced into unwanted abortions.

Give an example. Then insist:

Whether the victims of abused and coerced abortions number in the tens of thousands or tens of millions, it's clear the abortion industry has failed them. We have an obligation to ensure that no abortion is unwanted, unnecessary, or dangerous.

I don't understand how anyone can say easy access to abortion is more important than protecting women from being pushed into unwanted abortions. Women should matter more than the abortion industry's profits.

Dealing With Women Who *Do Not* Regret Their Abortions

In debates, media interviews, and other venues, you may find your questioner trying to move the issue to the question, "What about the women whose lives have been helped by an abortion?"

In general, you should not engage in a direct attack against the presumption that some women are actually helped by abortion. Nor should you suggest that anything needs to be done about these cases. The claim that some women are helped by abortion should simply be left floating without response. Instead, respond by reiterating that your focus is on helping those women who have been or are at risk of being hurt by abortion. (Those who benefit from abortion clearly don't need your help.)

On some occasions, you may face women who will say to you, either privately or publicly, "I had

an abortion. And I don't regret it. It was the right thing for me to do."

How should you respond to her? Simply acknowledge her satisfaction with her abortion and draw out her concern for those not as fortunate, like this:

I'm glad that you haven't had any physical or psychological complications. I hope that you never do.

But I'm sure that you can understand that not all women are as lucky as you have been. Some were at very high risk for emotional complications after an abortion because it went against their moral beliefs and maternal desires. Some are victims of abuse and felt pressured into unwanted abortions.

Surely you'd agree that we need to do everything we can to help those women who want to be protected from unwanted abortions.

That's my goal . . . to help those women whom abortion is hurting.

NOTE: As previously discussed, polls show that people are already predisposed to think abortion causes more emotional harm than emotional benefits. This means that the claims of some women that their abortions improved their lives is unlikely to negate the fact that abortion also destroys many women's lives.

Also, bad news sells. Stories of injured patients are more compelling than stories of satisfied customers. Those who are suffering are seen as more deserving of our concern than those who are happy. Therefore, the natural tendency of people will be to have more empathy for the woman who has post-abortion problems than the woman whose abortion "made my life better."

This is why you can, and should, basically ignore claims that abortion has benefitted some women's lives. Don't feel a need to attack this claim. If you do, you may only aggravate the anger of women who are in deep denial about their own post-abortion issues.

Let the claims of benefit slide with as little notice as is polite. Use the opportunity to again focus on an expression of concern for those who

have not been so lucky. If the other party keeps hammering at claims of benefits from abortion while you keep hammering at concern for those who have been hurt, you may come off as "one note Charlie," but they will come off as insensitive.

Dealing With the Claim That Abortion Clinics Are Doing a Good Job

You will eventually hear the claim that Planned Parenthood, or your local abortion clinic, is doing a good job of protecting women from coerced abortions: "Our counselors watch for signs of abuse. We only do an abortion when a woman freely gives her consent."

Don't get distracted by efforts to prove they are lying. Instead, accept their claim at face value and ask them to help you in your efforts to bring all abortion clinics up to their standards. Since they concede the importance of protecting women from coerced abortions, yet they are still happening, ask them to support your proposed legislation that would require all clinics to screen for coercion.

Confidently Affirm That Abortion Is Harmful to Women

Don't hesitate to attack the myth that abortion is safe. As shown in "Background Polls and Psychology," voters are already inclined to believe abortion carries substantial risks and few, if any, benefits.

Actually, the best available research published in peer reviewed medical journals now shows that abortion is associated with elevated risks of death, reproductive health problems, depression, suicide, substance abuse, and other psychiatric problems.^{1,2,5} In fact, there is not a single known statistically-validated study demonstrating that abortion generally makes women's lives better. The only claims of benefits are anecdotal, and even in these cases, the women often say that while they don't regret having chosen abortion, they have struggled with it — or at best, have not had any major problems "yet."

But you don't need to be an expert to assert these facts. You don't even need to go into detail about

them. If some hard-nosed reporter presses you on the matter, refer them to the Elliot Institute and we'll see that they get the documentation. Or you can download much of the available documentation yourself from our web site at www.afterabortion.org.

But your job isn't to document abortion's dangers. Your job, as a campaigner, is to tap into a reality that most voters already suspect or know. Abortion isn't helping women. More often than not, it's hurting them.

Share What You've Learned From Post-Abortive Women You Know

From my friends and relatives who have had abortions, I've learned that abortion isn't a safety net, it's a safety hazard.

Using lines like the above, tell your audiences how your views on abortion have been shaped by your friends, relatives, or constituents who have suffered from post-abortion complications.

This accomplishes two major objectives. First, it clarifies that you are representing not just your own views but the views of women directly affected by their own abortions.

Second, it conveys to post-abortive women that you are a friend of other post-abortive women. Since you're not judging and condemning these friends and relatives, you probably wouldn't judge and condemn them either. In essence, you are clearly stating, "I am the friend of post-abortive women and men." Your audience needs to hear this.

If you don't have any post-abortive friends who have shaped your views on abortion . . . get some!

Just ask the leaders of your local post-abortion counseling programs (which are often affiliated with crisis pregnancy centers) to arrange for a private, confidential meeting with their staff and/or with past program participants who would be willing to share their experiences with you. Their stories, testimonies, and advice are guaranteed to touch your heart, broaden your mind, deepen your resolve, and strengthen your ability to defend the authentic rights of women.

Link "Pro-Choice" with "Poor-Choice"

My opponent says he is pro-choice. But he is really a "poor-choice" advocate. Abortion is hurting countless women every day — emotionally, socially, and physically. His poor-choice position would leave women exposed to unwanted, unnecessary, and dangerous abortions. Women deserve better, and I'm committed to giving women better options and helping those who have already suffered emotional or physical problems from a past abortion.

At www.poorchoice.org, we have a lengthy article discussing the advantages of using "poor-choice" rhetoric. If you want to know more than is included below, please read the full article there.

But in the context of a political campaign, it is probably sufficient to consider just the following four brief points.

1. Turn Public Ambivalence into Pro-Woman Advocacy.

This poor-choice rhetoric echoes the general public's view that abortion is not generally improving women's lives, but is more likely to cause harm (see "Background Polls and Psychology"). By using this term, you are calling forth the public's general ambivalence about abortion and putting your positive pro-woman proposals into sharper contrast with your opponent's tolerance for unregulated, unwanted, and dangerous abortions.

2. Use Poor-Choice Rhetoric to Remove Their Smokescreen.

Abortion advocates almost never use the word "abortion" because it elicits negative reactions from voters. They hide behind the word "choice," as if choice itself was inherently good. But we all know there are good choices and bad choices.

The simple rhetorical technique of reframing your opponent's "pro-choice" position as a "poor choice" position immediately moves the debate beyond the abstract "right to choose" to the key question of whether abortion is generally a good choice or a poor choice.

Whether you describe your "poor-choice opponent" in a tone of humorous wordplay or in a

mocking retort, you will be issuing an unavoidable challenge to your opponent to either (1) show when abortion is always a good choice, or (2) commit to join you in working to prevent abortion when it is a poor choice, as in the case of coerced abortions.

3. Beat Them at Their Own Game.

Abortion advocates have spent millions of dollars over 20 years to market “pro-choice” as a good thing. With this simple, memorable, and ironic turn of phrase, you can invert this marketing ploy on its head.

The similarity in sounds between “pro-choice” and “poor-choice” is so strong that it is especially powerful in linking the two ideas. Once it’s pointed out, the mind can’t help but notice it.

Have you ever noticed the little arrow in the space between the “E” and the “x” in the FedEx logo? Now that it’s been pointed out, you will . . . every time.

The same dynamic is true with the “poor choice” label. As the polls show, people already think abortion is an ugly experience with negative effects on women. Giving voice to preconceptions using “poor-choice” rhetoric is like pointing out the hidden arrow in the FedEx logo. Once the mental link is there, the ideas will connect again and again: pro-choice, abortion, poor-choice, regret, grief, sorrow . . .

Once the phrases “poor-choice,” “poor-choice advocates,” and “poor-choicers” are repeated enough, in every arena of the abortion debate, they will soon seep widely and deeply into the subconscious mind of every American. They will become as much a part of our language as the phrase “pro-choice” has become.

After hearing the phrase “poor-choice” often enough, even your political opponents will begin to struggle with this mental link. Soon, “poor choice” will be popping into their heads when they’re really trying to say “pro-choice!” What would you give for a film clip of your opponent saying, “I’m poor-choice!”?

4. Remind People that Women Want Positive Choices, Not Poor Choices.

Poor-choice rhetoric is also a good lead-in to the “*women deserve better*” message. Used to-

gether, these slogans emphasize the fact that those of us who are opposed to abortion really *do* care about women. We really do believe that abortion is a poor choice to offer women. The people who really care about women— pro-woman/pro-life advocates—are working to give women better options and happier lives.

Notes on When and How to Use the Poor-Choice Label

The “poor-choice” label should normally be directed at your opponent or the professional pro-abortion lobbying groups. You are not attacking women for their “foolish choices.” (Though many, perhaps a substantial majority, of post-abortive women will concede that it was a poor choice.) Instead, you should strive to make clear when you use the term that you are directing it against those who represent the interests of the abortion industry, which reaps millions of dollars in profits each year by its false promise to women that abortion is a “good choice.”

The poor-choice rhetoric lends itself to short, tight messages. For example, we have a three-line bumper sticker that reads: “Planned Parenthood. Poor-Choice Since 1916.”

If you’re not above a little negative campaigning, you may want to print up bumper stickers that read: “Vote Poor-Choice. [Your Opponent’s Name Here].” Such a bumper sticker carries with it an additional meaning. It links your opponent’s name not only with abortion advocacy, but also with the idea that he or she is a “poor choice” on election day.

You Debate Your Opponent

Whenever possible, challenge your opponent to support specific legislative goals that would protect women from being coerced into *unwanted* abortions. This challenge must be repeatedly and insistently made. Your goal is to force your opponent to either agree to pro-woman abortion regulations (and thus alienate his or her radical pro-abortion supporters) or dance around such pro-woman protections.

Any sign of the latter should be portrayed as

evidence that he or she is more interested in protecting the profits of the abortion industry than the welfare of women. Insist that the true nature of the abortion conflict is between the rights and well-being of mothers *and* their unborn children versus the profits of the abortion industry and the population controllers who are exploiting them.

As shown in “Background Polls and Psychology,” public opinion and the experience of post-abortive women is on your side. Don’t avoid the abortion issue. Make it one of your biggest issues, no matter what the political leanings are in your district. Put your opponent on the defensive.

One of your core messages should be, “I’m convinced that abortion hurts women, children, and families, and I’m the one who cares.”

Look for an opportunity to describe your opponent as holding a “poor-choice” position. Bait your opponent with this label as often as possible. Only two things can happen.

He or she will ignore the label and it will stick.

Or, your opponent or the moderator will challenge your use of the term, insisting that the proper description is that he or she is “pro-choice.” That is your opening to point out that abortion either helps women or hurts them. If it is hurting them, he is either making a poor choice to defend it or he doesn’t care if women end up making poor choices because they are not given enough information or options to make better choices.

Within this context, you can then reassert your position:

Women deserve better than abortion. I’ve described how I’m going to work to stop unwanted, unnecessary, and dangerous abortions. What are you going to do to protect women from abortionists who care more about maximizing their client base than they do about the welfare of individual women?

Knowing how many women are haunted by grief over their past abortions, I would be a poor choice for voters if I didn’t take the position I have taken.

If it is appropriate, you may also try to frame the issue with the assertion that the welfare of the woman and her children, born and unborn, is inter-

twined by God. To hurt one is to hurt them both. To help one is to help them both. You are choosing to help them both.

A Legislative Agenda

Obviously, the integrity of your pro-woman/pro-life campaign theme will be enhanced if you have substantive legislative initiatives that help to implement your vision. A number of pro-woman legislative proposals are described at length in *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation*, which describes the strategy discussed here in much greater detail. We highly recommend that you read it. Model legislation is also posted at www.makingabortionrare.com.

For the purpose of campaigning, however, it will generally be sufficient to simply express your general support for legislation covering one or more of the following needs:

- Protecting women from being coerced into *unwanted* abortions;
- Guaranteeing women’s right to be *fully informed* about the risks and alternatives to abortion;
- Requiring physicians to properly screen patients for characteristics that would place them at higher risk of physical or psychological complications;
- Expanding the rights of injured patients to recover fair compensation for physical or psychological harm resulting from abortion;
- Supporting expanded access to post-abortion counseling programs; and
- Supporting research to better identify which women are at greatest risk of post-abortion problems so they can receive better counseling.

In presenting these proposals, it is also an excellent time to frame the issue as a conflict between the welfare of women and the profits of the abortion industry. You might even take the opportunity to put your opponent on the defensive with a comment such as this:

These proposals will help protect women from unwanted, unnecessary and dangerous abortions. Certainly everyone of good will can agree that these proposals will truly help

women. The only legislators who would oppose these initiatives care less about protecting women than they do about protecting the abortion industry's profits!

Sample Speech Segments

The following is an example of how a candidate for public office can address the abortion issue from a pro-woman/pro-life perspective. It is designed to provide "sound bites" for the media that are difficult to distort. It is not intended to be used in its entirety, but in sections appropriate to the venue.

I'm pro-life and I'm also pro-woman.

From my friends and relatives who have had abortions, I've learned that abortion isn't a safety net, it's a safety hazard.

I understand the pressures that drive women to undergo abortions, often in violation of their own moral and maternal beliefs.

In many cases, women are being pressured into unwanted abortions by their boyfriends, parents, social workers, or doctors. This is a grave injustice to women. There are countless cases of women being badgered and abused until they submit to an unwanted abortion. Reports of women like 17-year-old Tanika Fox, who was killed for refusing to have an abortion, appear regularly in the news.

When I heard about the forced abortion of Denise Kalasky, I wanted to cry. This 15-year-old girl had been repeatedly raped by her own father. When she became pregnant, he found an abortionist who would do the abortion against her will. Despite her cries that she didn't want it done, she was strapped down and anesthetized and her child was taken from her. She writes: "I grieve every day for my daughter. I have struggled to forget the abuse and the abortion. I can do neither. All I can think of is, 'I should have done more, fought more, struggled more for the life of my child.'"

It's not "Denise" who should have done more. It's us! To protect the sacred cow of "choice,"

we've ignored the problem of forced abortions for thirty years! Enough is enough. We owe it to women like "Denise" and Tanika to stop this terrible abuse!

This is one of the abortion industry's dirty little secrets. They have always known that many of the women coming through their doors are being pressured into unwanted abortions. But what do they do? They accept the abuser's money, reassure her it will turn out fine, then do the abortion. We need to put a stop to this abuse of women.

I will support legislation that will protect women from unwanted, unnecessary, and dangerous abortions.

I will support programs that help women facing the threat of an abortion by offering real choices, not just patronizing rhetoric. They deserve proper counseling; shelter from abuse; and the emotional, physical, and financial support to help them welcome their children into the world.

We also need to address the emotional pain and grief of women and men who have already lost a child to abortion. Blame and finger-pointing are simply wrong.

What is needed is an attitude of understanding and charity. We need to be witnesses of God's mercy. We also need to acknowledge our own failure as a society to offer women the moral support and practical help they deserve and need to welcome a child into our world. It is not just the abortion industry that has failed pregnant women. We too have failed to support them as we should.

I'm not going to throw stones at people. Instead, I will support the many ministries that provide post-abortion counseling and healing, as well as other public programs that help women both before and after a pregnancy.

I'm also deeply concerned about the emotional damage abortion is inflicting on American women. Major medical studies have shown that psychological breakdowns increase several fold after an abortion. The

suicide rate goes up seven-fold.

In the case of Donna Jean Fleming, she had an emotional breakdown only a few days after her abortion. She wanted to be rejoined with her child who was aborted, so she leaped into the Los Angeles River from a bridge fifty feet above it — along with her two- and three-year old sons. Donna and her older son lived; the younger was killed by the fall. Donna was incarcerated in a mental institution.

Did the abortionist do a psychological evaluation of Donna to see if she was at risk of a breakdown after her abortion? No. Even though there are more than 34 studies identifying risk factors that can predict which women are most likely to have the most severe emotional reactions to abortion, the clinic didn't screen for these risk factors. They just took the money, did the abortion, and left Donna to deal with her grief as best she could.

It didn't work out. Do they care? I don't know. But I care. I care about Donna and hundreds of thousands of other women who have attempted or completed suicide following an abortion.

Other recent studies show that abortion is associated with a five-fold higher rate of subsequent substance abuse, as well as higher rates of psychiatric care, suicide attempts, pre- and post-term deliveries, and even breast cancer. I sincerely believe abortion is a poor choice to recommend to women and is causing far more harm to American women than most people realize.

These new studies show that abortion has failed women. It is hurting, not helping, them. Women deserve better.

As far back as 1989, C. Everett Koop — then Surgeon General — recommended a major government-funded study to definitively investigate abortion complications. Unfortunately, this study was blocked by pro-abortion lobbyists. They oppose more research because they know the American people will reject abortion when the full extent of its dan-

gers are finally revealed. These lobbyists get paid to protect the abortion industry, not to protect women. I think it's time we finally fund the research needed to find out how big the problem of abortion complications really is.

I am also deeply disturbed that many politicians are less interested in protecting women than they are in protecting abortion industry profits. Many poor-choice advocates have consistently opposed laws that would ensure that women are fully informed about all of abortion's potential risks. They have opposed laws that would ensure that parents know when a 28-year-old man is taking their 14-year-old daughter out of state to undergo a potentially dangerous abortion. And they have also opposed laws that would make it easier to hold abortionists liable for the injuries they inflict on women. Can't we at least agree to protect women?

Sadly, some people see abortion as a tool for population control. Many even support international aid for population control programs that include forced abortions. But I ask you, how can a politician who tolerates forced abortions call himself pro-choice? Aren't they really for no-choice?

I don't think that way. I'm not willing to sacrifice the rights and welfare of women for the sake of population control. I'm not willing to reduce the welfare rolls by letting abortion clinic counselors deceive poor women into believing that their lives will be better if they simply go along with an abortion. It's not true.

One of the problems we face is that the poor-choice lobbyists for the abortion industry have a lot more pull with legislators than the women who have been hurt by abortion. But I'm on the side of women.

I believe that God has intertwined the welfare of women and their children. If we help one, we help both. On the other hand, if we hurt one, we hurt both. That's why abortion hurts women — emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. One can't hurt a woman's children

without hurting her.

A far better alternative is to help both the mother and her child. That's what pregnancy help centers are doing around the country: befriending women and giving them the support, encouragement, and resources that make it easier to bring an unplanned baby into the world and to experience the joy of that new life.

If I am elected, I will consistently endeavor to help both women and their children. I will not sacrifice either. Instead of seeking federal funding for abortion, I will support funding for alternatives to abortion, research on abortion complications, and support for programs that promote post-abortion healing.

A Sample of Questions and Answers

MEDIA: *What is your position on abortion?*

CANDIDATE: I believe we absolutely must defend the rights of women and stop the common practice of dangerous and *unwanted* abortions, which are injuring hundreds of thousands of women every year.

We don't hear about it in the press, but our country is faced with a terrible plague of *unwanted* abortions — cases where mothers would rather carry their pregnancies to term, but instead submit to unwanted abortions to satisfy the demands of others.

I oppose allowing abortion to be used as an escape route for unloving, irresponsible boyfriends, husbands, or those who abuse women. I oppose allowing parents to force their daughter into an unwanted abortion without regard for her own desire to keep her child. I oppose making women suffer the pain and aftereffects of abortion alone just so others won't be inconvenienced.

MEDIA: *Would you support legislation that would limit a woman's right to have an abortion?*

CANDIDATE: I support laws that would protect women from being pressured into unwanted abortions. I support laws that would make abortion clinics accountable for failing to protect women from being coerced into *unwanted* abortions. If abor-

tion is to be a decision made between a woman and her doctor, then we should hold the doctor responsible for ensuring that the mother's desire to have an abortion is truly her own, and not a decision being forced on her by her husband, boyfriend, or parents.

If my opponent truly cares more about protecting women's interests than protecting the abortion industry interests, I hope he will promise to work with me in seeking legislation to protect these women from *unwanted* abortions.

MEDIA: *Aren't your proposals really intended to make it more difficult for women to get abortions?*

CANDIDATE: My proposals would simply codify the high professional standards which the Supreme Court itself has already described in *Roe v. Wade* and the other abortion cases. It is the obligation of the physician to ensure that a woman's choice to abort is fully free and that she is fully informed of *all* the risks and alternatives. Abortion providers should have a legal responsibility to protect their patients from unwanted, unnecessary, or dangerous abortions.

MEDIA: *How would you propose to heal the divisions in our country over the abortion issue?*

CANDIDATE: First, we need to protect women from feeling forced into unwanted abortions. Women deserve more support and better alternatives.

Second, I think all people of good will can agree that we need to do more to understand when and why some abortions are dangerous. In 1989, the Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, reported that there had not yet been enough adequate research on the aftereffects of abortion. Dr. Koop recommended a \$100 million research project to study the effects of abortion.

What was the response from Congress? They ignored the Surgeon General's recommendation. Why? Poor-choice advocates argued against doing more research because they are afraid that more proof of abortion's risks would further increase abortionists' liability for the damages women suffer.

MEDIA: *I don't understand what you mean by "unwanted" abortions. If a woman chooses to have an abortion, that's the choice she wants.*

CANDIDATE: I can't tell you how many times I have heard women's stories of how they were threatened, badgered, pressured, and even literally dragged to abortion clinics by abusive husbands, angry parents, or selfish boyfriends. These women would rather have had their babies, but the pressures they faced from other people or their circumstances made them feel they had no choice. Sadly, no one at the clinics they went to offered to help them to overcome these pressures.

Another example is found in China's national "one child" policy, where couples are brutally forced to undergo unwanted abortions. This points to another important difference between my opponent and myself. My opponent supports government funding for agencies which support *forced* abortions for unwilling women for the purpose of suppressing population growth in developing countries.

My poor-choice opponent is closing his eyes to minority women in developing countries who are being forced into unwanted abortions. He's even willing to pay for it. Women deserve better.

MEDIA: *What are your views on abortion in the case of rape or incest?*

CANDIDATE: I support legislation that protects women's interests. Women who are victims of rape or incest deserve our support and the best medical care and counseling available. It doesn't benefit them to be rushed into abortion regardless of the risks. That would only risk victimizing them a second time.

I've read the testimonies of women who have had sexual-assault pregnancies and either carried to term or had abortions, and what these women are saying is a lot different than what most people assume.⁴ Those who had abortions are saying it made their problems worse, while those who gave birth are saying that it was the best choice. Before the government gets involved in the business of funding abortions for rape victims, I would like to invite these women to testify about their real experiences. The government shouldn't rush in and get

involved on the basis of preconceptions or political agendas. Let's find out from the women who have really been there what is helpful and what is harmful.

MEDIA: *Some abortion doctors say they won't be able to afford to do abortions if they face the kind of liability you're talking about. If women can't get abortions from doctors, won't that lead us back to the dangers of back-alley abortions?*

CANDIDATE: Abortionists will only stop doing abortions if it turns out that abortion is far more dangerous than they have been telling us. Proper liability will lead to proper care and screening. This will help protect women.

It is insane to suggest that in order to prevent illegal abortions, we should allow dangerous legal abortions. One of the main reasons the Supreme Court legalized abortion was so that medical doctors would protect women from having ill-informed, dangerous abortions.

If doctors simply do abortions for anyone who hands them money, without regard to whether or not the dangers outweigh the benefits, that's no better than was done when abortion was illegal. In fact it's worse, because now women are being misled by these abortionists into believing that legalized abortion is safer than it really is.

STAYING INFORMED

• • •

The Elliot Institute is an internationally recognized leader in the field of post-abortion education, research, and outreach. We need *your help* to protect women and families from the ravages of abortion.

Even more importantly, we want to *help you* become a better advocate for women.

One way we can help you is by getting timely information to you about new research documenting the harm abortion does to women as soon as it is published. We can also send you timely notices of breaking news regarding abortion-related deaths, the homicides of women who refuse to abort, and other items in the news.

These updates, which may also include suggested talking points, will help you to issue timely news releases commenting on these breaking stories.

You can sign up by sending a blank email to **politics@afterabortion.info**, and our listserver will automatically add you to the appropriate list.

You will *only* receive information specifically relevant to the political and legislative approach described in *Reversing the Gender Gap*. We expect these notices to be relatively infrequent, less than once a month.

In addition, we would like to hear from you about what works and what doesn't. Perhaps you will develop additional sound bites and talking points that you are willing to share with other pro-woman/pro-life politicians. And we're sure you will want to hear from other politicians what their experiences have been using this approach. This information will be shared through **politics@afterabortion.info**.

Send a blank email to **politics@afterabortion.info** to receive additional support materials as they become available.

REFERENCES CITED

• • •

1. *Detrimental Effects of Abortion: An Annotated Bibliography with Commentary (3rd Edition)*. Edited by Thomas W. Strahan. (Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2002) ISBN 0-9648957-0-6
2. Burke T, Reardon DC. *Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion*. (Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2002) ISBN 0-9648957-8-1
3. Reardon, DC. *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation*. (Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 1996) ISBN 0-9648957-6-5
4. *Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault*. Edited by David C. Reardon, Julie Makimaa and Amy Sobie. (Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2000) ISBN 0-9648957-1-4
5. www.afterabortion.org
6. *The Elliot Institute National Opinion Survey of 600 Adults Regarding Attitudes Toward a Pro-Woman / Pro-Life Agenda*. Conducted December 12, 2002 by Rasmussen Public Opinion Research, Ocean Grove, New Jersey.
7. Sobie AR, Reardon DC. The Benediction of Kate Michelman: Case Study on Coping With Post-Abortion Trauma. *The Post-Abortion Review* 1999; 7(1):1-3.
8. Tolman RM. Protecting the children of battered women. *J Interpersonal Violence* 1988; 3(4):476-483. Burke and Reardon, *Forbidden Grief*. op cit.
9. Hilberman E, Munson K. Sixty battered women. *Victimology* 1977-78; 2:460-470.
10. Horon IL, Cheng D. Enhanced surveillance for pregnancy-associated mortality—Maryland, 1993-1998. *JAMA*. 2001;285(11):1455.
11. Krulewich CJ, et al. Hidden from view: violent deaths among pregnant women in the District of Columbia, 1988-1996. *J Midwifery & Women's Health* 2001; 46(1):4.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

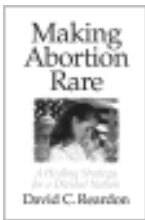
• • •

To find out more about the pro-woman/pro-life strategy, contact:

Elliot Institute
PO Box 7348
Springfield, IL 62791
(217) 525-8202

www.afterabortion.org
www.poorchoice.org

For further reading:



Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation
by David C. Reardon, Ph.D.

A leading post-abortion expert reveals a comprehensive, practical and compassionate program of pastoral, political, and educational reform that can help bring an end to abortion on demand. “Brilliant . . . *Making Abortion Rare* will accomplish what its title claims — and much more.” —Fr. Paul Marx, founder, Human Life International

Additional Resources



Aborted Women, Silent No More
by David C. Reardon, Ph.D.

Reardon’s groundbreaking classic exposes abortion’s impact on women. The Conservative Book Club said this “may be the most powerful book ever published on abortion.”

Detrimental Effects of Abortion: An Annotated Bibliography With Commentary

edited by Thomas W. Strahan

This extensive and well-researched bibliography includes more than 1,200 entries to studies on abortion, with summaries of key findings. A great resource!



Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion

by Theresa Burke, Ph.D.

Explores the pain and trauma many women experience after abortion, and the social and political obstacles that often prevent them from finding healing. “*Forbidden Grief* stands to become a classic.” —Patrick Fagan, Heritage Foundation

The Jericho Plan: Breaking Down the Walls That Prevent Post-Abortion Healing

by David C. Reardon, Ph.D.

Explores the spiritual and emotional impact of abortion and the need to foster post-abortion healing within the Church.



Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault

edited by David C. Reardon, Julie Makimaa, and Amy Sobie

Women share their experiences of sexual assault pregnancy and abortion. Find out the truth about the impact of abortion in “the hard cases.”

To order these books, contact Acorn Books at 1-888-412-2676

ORDER FORM FOR PRINT COPIES

NOTES

• • •

For additional copies of this booklet, call,

1-888-412-2676

or send your check or money order to:

**Elliot Institute
PO Box 7348
Springfield, IL 62791**

No. of copies ordered _____

Price per copy _____

Additional Donation* _____

Total Enclosed _____

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone _____

Single copy price: \$5 (postage included).

Free e-book copies can be downloaded from:
www.afterabortion.info/news/gap.htm

Multiple copies are *only* available in shrink-wrapped bundles of 10.

<u>Total Copies</u>	<u>Cost Per Copy</u>
10	\$3.50 each
20-80	\$3.00 each
100-240	\$2.20 each
260-500	\$1.50 each
500 or more	\$1.25 each

If you or your organization would like to distribute this booklet to political candidates in your area, contact us for information on bulk orders.

**The Elliot Institute is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All proceeds from the sale of this booklet will be used to help support post-abortion research and education. Your donation will be a further contribution to our ministry.*

