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**Since 2010, extremist politicians have quietly passed more than 330 new restrictions on access to abortion and other critical reproductive health care services. A woman's constitutional rights should not depend on her zip code.**

In too many parts of the country, it has become extremely difficult for women to safely and legally end a pregnancy – because of legislative attacks, a woman's ability to make her own personal decisions about her reproductive health care differs widely from state to state. The promise of our Constitution is one of equal rights and protections for all. But politicians are trying to sneak around the Constitution and decades of judicial precedent, breaking that promise for millions of women. We need a federal law that puts a woman's health, safety, and rights before politics. The Women's Health Protection Act does exactly that.

**Now is the time to Act for Women.** When a right is protected by the U.S. Constitution and decades of Supreme Court precedent, all states must respect that right. That's why courts across the country have stepped in to strike down underhanded laws as unconstitutional. Most recently, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2016 ruling in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* struck down two abortion restrictions under challenge in the case, preserving access for thousands of Texas women and signaling that similar laws across the country are also unconstitutional. But this growing reproductive health care crisis demands action not only from our nation's highest court, but also from our elected officials. Our leaders face a relentless anti-choice administration and majority in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, and it is essential that you remind them that reproductive rights are a priority for you. This toolkit provides ideas for how you can support the Women's Health Protection Act in your community.

**The Women's Health Protection Act (S. 510/H.R. 1322)** is a federal bill that would defend the constitutional rights of every woman to decide for herself whether to continue or end a pregnancy – no matter where she lives. By keeping politicians out of our personal health care decisions, the bill would ensure that abortion providers are not singled out for medically unwarranted restrictions that harm women by choking off access to safe, legal, high-quality abortion care. The Women's Health Protection Act would prohibit state and federal politicians from imposing a range of dangerous anti-choice provisions, such as those that:

- single out the provision of abortion services for restrictions that are more burdensome than those imposed on medically comparable procedures;
- do not significantly advance women's health or the safety of abortion services; and
- make abortion services more difficult to access.



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To learn more about how the Act would help protect your reproductive rights, visit [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org).

### **Why do we need the Women's Health Protection Act?**

Extremist lawmakers are playing politics with women's health. In states across the country, politicians are imposing a range of dangerous, anti-choice provisions that interfere with a woman's ability to make personal decisions about her reproductive health, family, and future. These measures have nothing to do with women's health and safety – in fact, they harm women's health by making it more difficult to access reproductive health care. Our elected officials must do their part to protect our constitutional rights from laws aimed at blocking women's access to safe and legal abortion.

### **Who is supporting the Women's Health Protection Act?**

The Women's Health Protection Act was first introduced by **Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)** and **Representative Judy Chu (D-CA)** in November 2013; it has been reintroduced in each Congress since then (in January 2015 and in March 2017). **Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)** is a lead cosponsor in the Senate, and **Representative Marcia Fudge (D-OH)** and **Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL)** are lead cosponsors in the House of Representatives. These champions have been joined by an ever-growing list of co-sponsors (see the full list at [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org)). Municipal officials have issued public statements and passed resolutions, calling on their state and federal lawmakers to protect women's constitutional rights. State lawmakers have endorsed the bill too because they know firsthand that we need a federal response now. And with each day, new advocacy organizations, medical professionals, and people of faith are joining the campaign.

**Now, it's your turn to Act for Women.**

**Ready to take action?**



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Here are some ways to Act for Women in your state:

## 1. Write a letter to the editor about the Women's Health Protection Act.

Want to spread the word about the Women's Health Protection Act in your community? Consider writing a letter to the editor (LTE) of your local newspaper about how the Women's Health Protection Act will guard access to reproductive health care for women in your state or neighboring states. LTEs are a great way to educate the public while advocating for your position. And Members of Congress use them to measure their constituents' opinions on key matters.

While there is sample language at the end of this toolkit, be sure to personalize your LTE to tell readers why the Women's Health Protection Act is important to *you*. It's best if your LTE can be in response to something that is happening in your state or to a recent article in your newspaper about reproductive health.

Remember: keep it brief and keep it local. The shorter the letter, the more likely it is to be published. Typically, 250-300 words is a good length. You can check your newspaper's website for any letter guidelines they may have, and for instructions regarding how to submit your LTE. Connect your letter to your local community as much as you can.

If it doesn't get published at first, try again. It may be that the newspaper received a particularly large number of letters one week, or that they would prefer for a letter to be printed in response to current events. Re-submit your letter again with a new angle. And if you do get published, let us know and we'll post it on [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org)!

## 2. Attend a Town Hall meeting and ask about the Women's Health Protection Act

Town Hall meetings are more popular than ever – and they are great opportunities for you and your neighbors to hear firsthand from your Member of Congress while she or he is back home in your community. These forums often feature the Member of Congress discussing current timely issues, and they often allow for questions from the audience.

Visit the website of your Member of Congress ([Congress.gov/members](http://Congress.gov/members)) to see if a Town Hall meeting is scheduled, and feel free to call their local office to ask for details. Prepare for the Town Hall by finding out whether your Member of Congress is a cosponsor of the Women's Health Protection Act at [Congress.gov](http://Congress.gov) and then tailor your question accordingly. Feel free to contact us for technical assistance at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org).

*If they are a cosponsor:* Briefly introduce yourself, stating your name and town. Say that you are concerned about the eroding access to abortion and other reproductive health care due to the coordinated attacks on abortion access happening in states across the country, and that we need a federal response like the Women's Health Protection Act. Thank them for being a cosponsor and ask how you can help them support the bill. Note that even if your Member of Congress is already a cosponsor, it is still very important that they hear this note of thanks and are reminded of how important this issue is to their constituents.

*If they are not a cosponsor:* Find out what you can about their positions on reproductive rights issues. If they support reproductive rights, you can use a Town Hall as a chance to make sure they understand the importance of the Women's Health Protection Act and ask them to consider cosponsoring it. If they are not supportive of reproductive rights, it is still important that your voice and perspective is heard. If they are very hostile to reproductive rights, contact us for additional technical assistance at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org).

### **3. Connect the Women's Health Protection Act to your State Work**

If you're already involved with a state or local pro-choice organization, as a staff member, volunteer, activist, board member, or coalition partner, consider teaming up for an action about the Women's Health Protection Act! Host a panel discussion featuring local experts on reproductive rights, hold a letter writing party to your Members of Congress, or consider a visibility event, such as tabling at a community fair. We can help provide petition templates, speaker suggestions, and Act for Women swag to hand out at events. Want to go even further? Contact us at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org) for assistance in inviting your Member of Congress to speak at an event, if appropriate.

### **4. Schedule an in-district lobby visit to discuss the Women's Health Protection Act.**

In-district lobby visits are when a constituent goes to a Member of Congress' district office to meet with staff or the Member to talk about a specific bill or issue. Members of Congress often have several offices in their districts/states, so chances are good that there is one near you. Find your Member's office information on their website; some Members have a meeting request form on their website which you can use to request a meeting, while others may require you to call. Be sure to call the number of the office nearest you. Explain that you are constituent seeking a meeting to discuss reproductive rights and the Women's Health Protection Act. Lobby visits are more fun when you have likeminded colleagues, friends, or neighbors with you, so team up with three or four other people to schedule one group visit.

Before your meeting, read up on your Member of Congress. Check their website and read their biography, recent press releases, committee assignments, and which issues are most important to them. Learn what you can about their positions on reproductive health, rights, and justice

issues. You will need to know whether your Member already supports the Women’s Health Protection Act, so you can be clear about what your ask is.

*Before the meeting:*

- Complete background research on the issue and the legislator
- Be clear about your goals of the meeting, whether that goal is thanking them for their support and offering to help move the bill, or asking them to support the Act
- Bring a friend or two and divide up your roles – one of you can lead the meeting, one can tell a story, and one can make the “ask”
- Contact us at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org) if you need help preparing or if you need further information

*During the meeting:*

- Introduce yourselves
- Thank the legislator or staff member for the meeting
- Thank them for any recent votes or positions you agree with
- Explain why you are here. Why do you support the Women’s Health Protection Act? Why is this issue important to you?
- It’s okay not to know everything about the bill or the issue – you don’t need to be an expert lobbyist. You are a constituent who cares about this issue, and that is enough. Your voice is important.
- If possible, share a story to help personalize the situation and illustrate why this issue matters. It’s okay to be emotional and personal, but it’s still important to stay professional.
- Be clear about what you are asking. Do you want them to cosponsor this bill? If they already are a cosponsor, you can ask them to recruit more colleagues to cosponsor, to talk about the Act to the media or their constituents, and find out what they think you can do to help move the Women’s Health Protection Act.
- Thank them again!

## 5. Take a Local Stand in Your City

Since 2010, extremist politicians have quietly passed more than 330 restrictions that interfere with the very personal decisions that should belong to women and families. That’s why cities across the country are endorsing the Women’s Health Protection Act. Local elected officials are taking a stand by passing city council and county commission resolutions or issuing statements in **New York, NY; Austin and Houston, TX; San Francisco, CA; and Dane County, WI** about the Women’s Health Protection Act. Local resolutions are critical to raising awareness, building momentum for proactive legislation, and holding lawmakers accountable. State and federal lawmakers take notice when localities lay the groundwork for comprehensive policies.



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Want to make a more concerted effort to gather municipal endorsements? Check out the Advocacy Tools section of this guide for a sample local resolution and contact your local officials to ask them to pass a resolution in support of the Women's Health Protection Act. Such resolutions can be easily connected to pressing local issues and a broad call for reproductive health access. Contact us for strategic resources at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org).

## **6. #ActforWomen Online**

Put your social media addiction to good use: commit to posting about the Women's Health Protection Act using the hashtag [#ActforWomen](#). As the campaign progresses, you can share opportunities for your supporters to take action in support of the bill. You can also find our sample tweets at the end of this toolkit.

Can't make an in-person meeting with your Member of Congress? Email, call, or engage them on social media to ask for their support of the Women's Health Protection Act or thank them for cosponsoring the bill – visit their Facebook pages and leave a comment or Tweet at them to publicly share your support for the bill. And you can always take action at [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org).

### **THANK YOU.**

Thank you for joining the effort to protect women's safe and legal access to reproductive health care. Please contact us with questions or ideas and for support on any of these projects at [info@actforwomen.org](mailto:info@actforwomen.org).

## Advocacy Tools

### Sample Letter to the Editor

A woman's ability to exercise her constitutional right to end a pregnancy safely and legally should not be determined by virtue of her zip code. The promise of our Constitution is one of equal rights and protections for all. We cannot allow politicians to break that promise to millions of women by enacting laws that make an end-run around the Constitution and disregard women's ability to make her own personal health care decisions. Since 2010, lawmakers have quietly passed more than 330 restrictions on access to abortion services and other critical reproductive health care. These measures have nothing to do with women's health and safety – in fact, they harm women's health by making it more difficult to access reproductive health care.

We need a federal law that puts women's health, safety, and rights before politics. The Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 1322/ S. 510) would uphold the constitutional right of every woman in the U.S. to safely and legally end a pregnancy with dignity, regardless of where she happens to live. By keeping politicians out of our personal health care decisions, the bill would ensure that abortion services remain available and that abortion providers are not singled out for medically unwarranted restrictions that harm women by preventing them from accessing safe, legal, high-quality care.

*[Get personal: Include your own reflection on the situation in your state and/or why the act is important to you. Many of us are feeling overwhelmed by the current state of national affairs. Sharing your unique perspective is a great, proactive way to put your concerns to good use and ignite change!]*

It is essential that Congress pass the Women's Health Protection Act to ensure that each woman can make decisions based on her personal values, the advice of the medical professionals she trusts, and what's right for her family.

### Sample Social Media Messages

Draw attention to why we need the Women's Health Protection Act:

- Politicians shouldn't play doctor. #ActForWomen keeps private medical decisions between women and their doctors: [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org).
- A woman's constitutional rights should not depend on her zip code. Tell your lawmakers to #ActForWomen: [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org).
- It's time we have a law that puts women's health & rights before politics. Tell your lawmakers to #ActForWomen: [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org)



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Highlight a bad state law that would be remedied by the federal bill and pair it with a call to action. For example:

- Restrictions in [#Texas](#) harm women by closing clinics & limiting access to care. Tell your lawmakers to [#ActForWomen](#): [actforwomen.org](http://actforwomen.org)

Take action and ask your Congressperson to become a sponsor:

- The reproductive health care crisis demands action not only from our courts, but also from Congress. Will [@NancyPelosi](#) [#ActForWomen](#)?
- All women deserve access to safe and essential abortion care, regardless of their zip code. We need [@SenSchumer](#) to support [#ActForWomen](#)! .
- [.@SenSchumer](#) We need a federal law that protects Women's Health & Rights. Will you support [#ActForWomen](#)?

Or, if your Member of Congress is already a sponsor, thank them:

- Thank you [@RepJudyChu](#) for championing women's health and reproductive rights by supporting the Women's Health Protection Act [#ActForWomen](#)!
- Thank you [@SenBlumenthal](#) for putting women's health and rights first by sponsoring the Women's Health Protection Act [#ActForWomen](#)!

Tell your story: why are reproductive rights important to you? Why do we need a federal law? Sign your post with "That's why I [#ActForWomen](#)."

### **Local Resolution Language in Support of the Women's Health Protection Act**

To urge Congress to protect each woman's health, her right to determine whether and when to bear a child, and her ability to exercise that right by limiting government interference with the provision of abortion services and ensuring legal, safe abortion care is available to any woman who needs it.

WHEREAS access to safe, legal abortion services is essential to women's health and central to women's ability to participate equally in the economic and social life of the United States.

WHEREAS legal abortion is a safe and common medical procedure in the United States, and the safety of abortion is promoted by generally applicable regulations that are based on medical evidence, but is threatened by politically motivated restrictions that single out abortion for different and more burdensome treatment than similar medical procedures.

WHEREAS government interference with the delivery of abortion services undermines women's personal and private medical decisions.



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WHEREAS many forms of government interference with the delivery of abortion services delay women's ability to obtain abortion services, and such delays create numerous hardships for women, including a) denial of access to early abortion procedures, b) increased risks to health, c) increased expense, d) absence from work, e) burdensome childcare arrangements, f) additional transportation costs and logistics, and g) the sacrifice of everyday necessities in order to find the additional funds, all of which can cause further delay.

WHEREAS despite constitutional protections, politicians at the state and federal levels continue to attack women's access to the full range of reproductive health care services.

WHEREAS government interference with the delivery of abortion services in particular harms the health of low-income women, women of color, young women, and women living in rural areas.

WHEREAS because the degree of government interference with the delivery of abortion services varies significantly from state to state, the ability of health care professionals to provide safe and legal abortion services, and thus of a woman's ability to exercise her constitutional rights, is often dependent upon her zip code.

WHEREAS the Women's Health Protection Act would prohibit states from imposing restrictions like **{PERSONALIZE: consider inserting state abortion restriction that would be prohibited by WHPA}** and would invalidate many of the laws that limit women's access to safe and legal abortion services and shame women for their health care decisions.

WHEREAS Act for Women, a national campaign that unites a growing list of nearly 90 national, state, and local organizations dedicated to reproductive health, rights and justice stand committed to the advancement of the Women's Health Protection Act.

**{IF RELEVANT}** WHEREAS **[Governing Body]** has long been a leader in protecting reproductive health care, and should support federal legislation limiting government interference with the delivery of abortion services throughout the country in order to ensure that women across the country have equal access to safe abortion services.

**RESOLVED** that the **[Governing Body]** recognizes the critical importance of protecting access to safe and legal abortion to protect women's health and ensure their dignity, equality, and autonomy.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **[Governing Body]** thanks those Members of Congress from **{City and State}** that are cosponsors of the Women's Health Protection Act;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **[Governing Body]** calls upon the United States Congress to pass and the President to sign the Women's Health Protection Act of 2017, H.R. 1322/ S. 510, 115th Cong. (2017).