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To: National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFP RHA)
and the Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC)

From: Lake Research Partners

Re: Key Findings on Public Attitudes on Family Planning¹

Date: May 31, 2011

Public opinion research over the past several years has consistently shown a remarkable level of support for family planning services and an overwhelming consensus that it should be widely accessible and free from restrictions. The latest survey findings, commissioned by NFP RHA/CCMC, give further evidence that there is a consensus among Americans in their support of and commitment to ensuring access to family planning services that includes birth control and contraception. The following memo summarizes these findings, as well as survey findings on family planning from previous years.

Key Findings

- **Americans strongly believe in the importance of family planning services as a basic preventive measure. This sentiment crosses all demographic and political lines and rises to the level of a core value.**
- **Americans see the birth control pill as one of the most important medical breakthroughs that has significantly impacted and improved women's lives. They also see family planning services and birth control in general as necessary for women to achieve equality.**
- **Americans view the birth control pill as they do other preventive measures like vaccines and medication for blood pressure and cholesterol. Additionally, they believe it should be covered by insurance, just like any other preventive health care medication.**
- **Support for maintaining access to family planning outweighs arguments on the current budget crisis. In an engaged debate, by a**

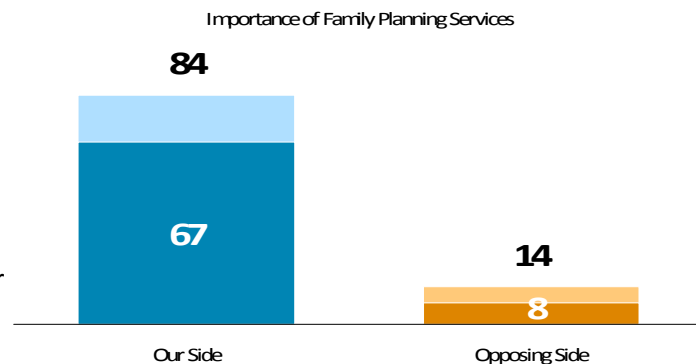
¹ Lake Research Partners designed this survey that was administered by Caravan in an omnibus survey conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,009 adults 18 years of age and older nationwide in the continental United States. The survey was conducted from May 19-22, 2011. Completed interviews were weighted by four variables: age, sex, party identification, and race to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total population, 18 years of age and older. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent.

margin of roughly two to one, Americans side with the view that everyone has a right to safe, affordable family planning services over the opposing position that with today's budget crisis we should not be spending taxpayer money on family planning services. This sentiment is consistent across most demographic groups.

- A significant proportion of Americans are willing to penalize elected officials for voting to defund family planning programs. Four in ten Americans say they would be less likely to support their member of Congress should he or she vote this way. College-educated women and Democrats are particularly likely to penalize elected officials for their votes on this issue.
- Americans are tired of the contentious, polarizing abortion debate. There is considerable consensus around getting away from the focus on abortion and having a broader discussion on reproductive health, which includes birth control, comprehensive sex education, and improving maternal and childbirth outcomes. There is broad consensus across demographic and political groups.

Importance of Family Planning Programs

- Americans strongly believe in the importance of family planning services as a basic preventive measure. Over eight in ten (84 percent) say family planning services, including birth control and contraception, are important to basic preventive health care services, and two-thirds (67 percent) express intensity around this idea.
 - Women place particular importance on family planning services as preventive health care, with 90 percent saying important and 75 percent very important. (Men: 78 percent important, 58 percent very).
 - Though intensity varies, there is bipartisan support for family planning as preventive care (Democrats: 93 percent important; independents: 88 percent; Republicans: 73 percent).
 - Belief in the importance of family planning is strong across demographic groups, and in fact, majorities across nearly all groups say it is very important (with the exceptions being independents who lean Republican and Republican men).
 - Perceived importance of family planning as a preventive measure is particularly strong among women (75 percent very important), particularly women under 50 (82 percent), Democratic women (85 percent), people who work part time (76 percent) or are not currently employed (74 percent), people in white collar sales (74 percent), unmarried women (78 percent), African Americans (78 percent), and parents (72 percent).



- **Previous research has also demonstrated strong agreement around birth control as preventive health care and an important medical breakthrough.** Research conducted for Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 2010² showed that three quarters of Americans (74 percent) agree that birth control, including the pill, is preventive health care, just like other preventive measures like taking medication for blood pressure and cholesterol, and vaccines. Three out of four people (74 percent) favor requiring insurance to cover the birth control pill and other forms of contraception at low or no cost, like they do for other preventive health care measures and medications.
- Additionally, in the same survey, seven in ten Americans – and 76 percent of American women – believe that the birth control pill is one of the most important medical advances of the last century and has had a positive impact on women’s day-to-day lives.
- In addition to being a medical breakthrough and basic prevention, the public also sees birth control in the context of women’s equality. Previous research conducted for CCMC and the Women Donors Network (WDN)³ found strong agreement around the idea that for women to achieve equality, they must have access to family planning services, including birth control and contraception. Roughly eight in ten voters in 2008 and 2007 agreed with this statement, with majorities expressing strong agreement.

Access and Funding

- **Support for maintaining access to family planning services outweighs arguments on the current budget crisis in an engaged debate.** By a margin of roughly two to one, Americans side with the view that everyone has a right to safe, affordable family planning services over the opposing position that with today’s budget crisis we should not be spending taxpayer money on family planning services.⁴ Six in ten Americans take the former position, while 31 percent side with the budget argument.
 - Women are particularly convinced by the argument around access to family planning , which they support by a 41 point margin. Men also side with access over budget concerns, but by a smaller margin (16 points).

² This survey was designed by Lake Research Partners and administered by Caravan in an omnibus survey conducted by telephone, using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,009 adults 18 years of age and older, nationwide in the continental United States. It was conducted April 29–May 2, 2010. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent.

³ **2007 Research, May 24-28, 2007:** Lake Research Partners designed this survey that was administered by Caravan in an omnibus survey conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,011 adults nationwide. Respondents were asked if they are currently registered to vote. The survey reached a total of 837 registered voters. After weights were applied, the total sample is 1,000 adults and 776 registered voters. The margin of error for the full sample of adults is +/- 3.1% and +/- 3.4% among registered voters.

2008 Research, November 2-4, 2008: Lake Research Partners designed and administered this election eve/night omnibus survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,200 likely registered voters nationwide. The sample consisted of 1,000 interviews among voters who were reached on landline phones and an oversample of 200 interviews among voters reached on cell phones. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 2.8%.

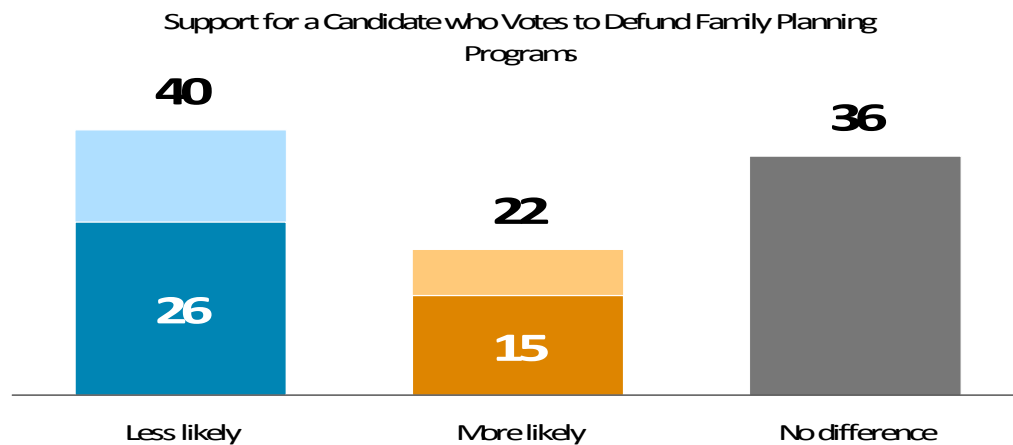
⁴ Now let me read you two statements and tell me which one comes CLOSER to your own point of view.

[ROTATE STATEMENTS] (Some people/Other people) say that everyone has a right to safe, affordable, and available family planning services, including birth control and contraception. (or) (Some people/Other people) say that we are in a budget crisis and now is not the time to be spending taxpayer money on family planning services. This is a personal decision.

- Americans across most demographic groups take the pro family planning position. Republican men are the exception and take the opposing view by 26 points.
- Democrats and independents side with the pro family planning position by double digits (60 points and 34 points respectively). Republican women take the pro family planning view (13 points), while Republican men side with the budget crisis position by 26 points.
- **CCMC/WDN’s research in previous years⁵ has also shown strong public support for the federal government providing funding for birth control for low-income women** (72 percent of voters in the 2008 and 2007 research agreed). These surveys also found strong agreement around the statement that couples should be able to have access to all birth control options, including emergency contraception. It is their decision whether to use birth control and it should be safe and available (86 percent of voters in 2008 and 2007 agreed with this statement).

Implications for Elected Officials

- **A significant proportion of Americans are willing to penalize elected officials who vote to defund family planning programs, including birth control and contraception.** Four in ten Americans (40 percent) say they would be *less* likely to support their member of Congress should he or she vote this way (26 percent much less likely), while 22 percent say they would be *more* likely to support such an elected official. Slightly over a third (36 percent) say this issue would not impact their vote.
- Those who are particularly likely to hold elected officials accountable on this issue include those with at least a college degree (32 percent say “much less likely to support”), especially college-educated women (35 percent), and Democrats (38 percent).
- Over four in ten women in key voting groups – women under 50 and independent women⁶ – say they are less likely to support a candidate who votes to defund family planning services (44 percent and 47 percent respectively).



⁵ See footnote 3

⁶ Note small sample size

Broadening the Abortion Debate

- Many studies have shown Americans are tired of the contentious, polarizing abortion debate. In light of these feelings, there is overwhelming agreement around the idea of engaging in a broader discussion around reproductive health – that includes greater access to birth control, teaching comprehensive sex education, and improving maternal health and childbirth outcomes – rather than focusing so much on abortion. Roughly eight in ten Americans agree with a statement around these goals, with half of the public expressing strong agreement.

While the current political debate focuses too much on abortion, there is a much broader discussion that needs to happen around reproductive health. We may have different opinions about abortion, so rather than continuing to argue about this one issue, our elected officials should focus on the broader context like providing greater access to birth control, teaching comprehensive sex education, and improving maternal health and childbirth outcomes. These are issues that will allow us to come together. (79 percent of adults agree, 49 percent strongly)

- Majorities across demographic groups – including Republican men – express agreement around broadening the debate. Agreement is particularly strong among women (55 percent strongly agree), women under 50 (60 percent), strong Democrats (68 percent), Democratic women (68 percent), independent women⁷ (63 percent), those who are employed part time (63 percent), unmarried women (58 percent), those earning under \$25,000 (58 percent) and those earning \$50-60,00 (63 percent), parents (55 percent), African Americans (60 percent), and those describing their race as “other”⁸ (59 percent).
- The consensus around broadening the debate is strong among voters as well. In CCMC’s 2010 election eve research,⁹ seven in ten General Election voters (71 percent) agreed with this same statement, with 51 percent expressing strong agreement. In this survey, agreement crossed partisan lines, with 90 percent of Democrats, 67 percent of independents, and 56 percent of Republicans expressing agreement.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this pre-election and election night omnibus survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,200 likely, registered voters nationwide. The sample consisted of 1,000 interviews among voters who were reached on landline phones and an oversample of 200 interviews among voters reached on cell phones. The survey was conducted October 31st through November 2nd, 2010.