

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 12, 2008

Contact:

Elaine Rose, Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of WA
(206) 328-7735
elaine.rose@ppnetworkwa.org

NEW POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS' RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Washingtonians want prescriptions filled without discrimination or delay

Across all demographics – including age, political party, geographic region, and gender – a new statewide poll shows that people support patients having access to their basic health care. When asked specific questions about pharmacists, the poll showed that people believe that pharmacists have a professional responsibility to the patient, and that delivery of health care is paramount. The poll of 577 Washingtonians was conducted in April, 2008 by Lake Research Partners for Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington.

Key findings:

- ♦ 74% of people polled say that a patient's rights to health care should have greater priority than a health care providers' personal, moral or religious beliefs.
- ♦ 70% of survey participants oppose allowing a pharmacist to refuse to fill prescriptions to which they are personally, morally or religiously opposed.
- ♦ 76% of those polled agree that birth control and contraceptives, including emergency contraception, are basic health care for women and a pharmacist should not deny access to appropriate medications based on personal, moral or religious beliefs.

- ♦ 74% of survey participants support The Washington State Board of Pharmacy rules ensuring that patients have their prescriptions filled without discrimination or delay.

“This poll confirms what we have known for a long time. The people of Washington support patients’ rights to access their medications without interference based on a provider’s personal, moral or religious beliefs. Specifically the people of Washington believe pharmacists should not refuse to dispense FDA-approved or doctor prescribed medications based on their personal, moral or religious beliefs” – Elaine Rose, Executive Director, Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of WA.

In April 2007 the Washington State Board of Pharmacy adopted rules that require pharmacies to fill valid prescriptions and provide medications without discrimination or delay. On July 26, 2007, the day the rules took effect, two individual pharmacists and a pharmacy owner (Stormans, Inc.) sued the State of Washington, challenging the new rules on constitutional grounds. In November 2007 a preliminary injunction was issued by the US District Court for the Western District of WA which blocks the Board of Pharmacy rules from taking effect until legal proceedings are completed. In December 2007 Planned Parenthood of Western WA and Northwest Women’s Law Center, who along with the firm Heller Ehrman LLP, are representing seven concerned citizens from around the state who have been allowed to intervene in the case, announced that they would appeal the injunction. The organizations say the lower court ruling misconstrues well-established legal precedent, and are confident that the regulations will be upheld and fully reinstated on appeal. Currently the injunction still stands which means that patients are at risk of being denied their FDA-approved medications by a pharmacist who decides not to dispense it.

Oral argument in the appeal *Stormans et al. v. Selecky et al.* is set for July 8th in Seattle in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

###

Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington protects and advances reproductive health and rights in Washington on behalf of the five Planned Parenthood affiliates in Washington. Collectively, the affiliates provide clinical and education services at 39 Planned Parenthood clinics in 18 counties around the state.