

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH KATHLEEN TURNER

SUBJECT: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND THE STATE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I am the 105th President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through our programming and events such as these while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to our programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit press.org/institute.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are club members. And if you hear applause in our audience, we'd note that members of the general public are attending so it is not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity. (Laughter)

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and our Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using hashtag NPClunch. After our guest's speech concludes, I will ask as many questions as time permits. Now I would like to introduce our head table guests, and I'd ask each of you here to stand up briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Mark Wojno, senior associate editor, Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine, and member of the National Press Club's Board of Governors; Laura

Lee, editorial assistant at NPR; Marilou Donahue, editor of *Artistically Speaking* with Marilou Donahue and Arts website; Molly Smith, Arena Stage artistic director; Larry Lipman, a senior editor at *AARP Bulletin* and former National Press Club President; Rachel Weiss, daughter of our speaker and singer/songwriter; Alison Fitzgerald, freelance journalist and Chairwoman of the Speaker's Committee. I'm going to skip our speaker for just a moment.

Marilyn Geewax, senior business news editor at NPR, and member of the Speakers Committee and organizer of today's event; Phyllis Scolatter [?], guest of our speaker; Peggy Engel, playwright and Press Club Institute member; Nancy Hughes, spokeswoman for the National Health Council; and Julio Aliaga, freelance journalist. (Applause)

Our speaker today, Kathleen Turner, is an actress and a civic activist. She first came to prominence in the early 1980s when she starred as the femme fatale Matty playing opposite William Hurt in the thriller "Body Heat." (Applause) She went on to star in a wide range of popular films and plays and even provided the voice for Jessica Rabbit, the acclaimed animated movie, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?"

But even as her acting career was blossoming, Turner maintained a deep interest in civic events. The daughter of a foreign service officer, she lived as a girl in Venezuela, Canada, England and Cuba. She graduated from the American School in London, and later from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She has been a decades-long member of People for the American Way, and a longtime supporter of Amnesty International. She not only thinks globally, but acts locally through City Meals, with whom she volunteers as a meal deliverer in New York City where she lives. (Applause)

Turner serves as the Chair of the Planned Parenthood Federation of American Board of Advocates and has testified before Congress on reproductive rights, which is her topic here today. Besides acting and doing political work, Turner is doing one thing: helping keep the spirit of Molly Ivins alive. Ivins was a newspaper columnist whose wit and passion for politics made her a legend. Turner knew Ivins. That's because when former Texas governor Ann Richards was undergoing cancer treatment in Manhattan, she happened to move into Turner's apartment building.

One day, Ivins was visiting with Richards, and they ran into Turner. They invited her out for an evening of laughter, tall stories and giving Turner a unique appreciation of Ivins spirits. Later, when Margaret Engel, a journalist known to many of us here in D.C. and her twin sister Allison wrote the play "Red Hot Patriot - The Kick Ass Wit of Molly Ivins," Turner became its star. Turner is appearing here in town at Arena Stage now through October 28th. And if you haven't already seen the play, the National Press Club Journalism Institute has tickets available for a special performance on September 13th where Miss Turner will meet the group after the performance. Please welcome Kathleen Turner. (Applause)

MS. TURNER: It is an honor and a pleasure to be back at the National Press Club. The last time I was here, I was speaking for child health. Now someone there gave me quite a compliment by pointing out that no one asked a single question after about my films. I have spent a good amount of time in Washington, D. C. as an advocate for the arts, as Chair of the Board of Advocates for Planned Parenthood, as a board member of People for the American Way. And I am extremely happy to be here, and I love performing Molly Ivins at Arena Stage.

Now, I will confess that at one point I came very close to spending a lot more time here than I anticipated, say, 15 or 20 years. I came to Washington with Joseph Papp, the late founder of the New York Public Theater. And we were here to lobby for continued funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. We met with Senator Strom Thurmond. Now, I said something that I deeply believe, that what we have left of the societies and civilizations that preceded us, more than any other aspect, are the arts; the paintings, the literature, the music, the architecture. These are the legacies left to us. Now, our own arts are what we will leave to the future.

Well, Senator Thurmond didn't exactly-- we weren't on the same page. (Laughter) He said, "Now little lady," which of course pleased me no end, "Now little lady, I been around here a little longer than you have, wouldn't you say so--" No. "You know, I have always liked blondes. Well, I'm here to tell you that this funding just ain't gonna happen, honey, little lady." I swear I had my arm cocked back, and thank goodness Joseph Papp grabbed my wrist and pulled it down because I thought one more 'little lady' and Strom was going to lose his teeth or his dentures or whatever the hell they were. Fortunately, we managed to get out of there with Strom Thurmond's smile and my freedom intact. And the National Endowment for the Arts continues to exist, though not with the same funding or freedom that it once enjoyed.

Now, that story will tell you something about my approach to activism, a word which comes, by the way, from the same root as actor, which means also one who participates. See, I believe passionately in being engaged as a citizen, about causes that I care about. Now one of the benefits of having achieved the level of success that I have is I can use my voice to bring attention to things. And the benefit of having achieved the age that I have, is I have the experience and a legitimacy to speak in my own voice, to speak the truth as I see it, and not give a damn whether someone might get upset about what I have to say.

I do not lend my name to groups to use on a list. I invest in the issues I care about and the organizations I respect, and I give what time I can. When I'm home in New York City, I am a board member and volunteer for City Meals on Wheels. And sometimes, I get to deliver to older people who can no longer get out. Now, many of them really don't know who I am, except the person from City Meals. And a couple of times, they have given me the compliment of saying that I should consider acting, because I have such a nice voice. (Laughter)

Now, one of the issues I care most deeply about is the health, safety, well being and rights of women. I am shocked that in this year's election women are facing the biggest threat to their freedom that I have seen in my lifetime. Consider family planning. Now, the Center for Disease Control considers the availability of family planning, the ability of women to have greater control over the timing and number of children they have, to be one of the top health advantages of the 20th century. Numerous research papers have linked the introduction of the birth control pill with positive social and economic gains for women, from completing higher education to marrying later, to narrowing the pay gap.

Earlier this year, the National Bureau of Economic Research found that earlier access to the pill was linked to higher hourly wages later in life. Now, this is no trifling fact in a sagging economy that is buttressed by roughly 40 percent of working wives out-earning their husbands. So, why here in the 21st century are so many people trying to reduce women's access to family planning? It does seem as though we were going back in time. It simply does not make sense.

Didn't you journalists just feel some professional sympathy for Andrea Mitchell, who had to try and keep a straight face and go on with an interview when conservative funder Foster Friess told a gal could save on contraception if they put an aspirin between their knees? All right, that was pretty silly. In fact, that was especially silly. But attacks on family planning are not a joke.

Last year, seven states restricted or barred any family planning funds from going to Planned Parenthood or any other healthcare provider that also provides abortions. When I was visiting the Planned Parenthood affiliate in Los Angeles, it happened to be a day when they were providing abortions. Now, the doctor in charge of the clinic whispered to me as we toured that, of course, Fridays was the day that they offered vasectomies. Well, I had to ask her if they'd ever encountered people outside the clinic trying to stop men from entering. (Laughter) It's just something to think about.

Now, one in five women in America use or have used Planned Parenthood's services, much to the benefit of men also. But all over the country, conservative politicians try to outdo each other in calling for the destruction of Planned Parenthood. Do they really have no concern for the millions of women who rely on Planned Parenthood for basic healthcare? And yes, contraception is a basic healthcare. It is essential to the health of women and the well being of their families. If a woman cannot control her reproductive choices, she cannot control her life.

Every single Republican in the House of Representatives has voted to end Title X, family planning funding. Every single one. These are the same people who keep talking about saving the taxpayers money. Now according to the Guttmacher Institute, publicly funded family planning services help women avoid 1,940,000 unintended pregnancies each year, which would result in 860,000 unintended births, and 810,000 abortions. Now, every dollar saved taxpayers, \$3.74 in Medicaid costs eliminating the family planning program would cost taxpayers billions of dollars in increased healthcare.

And then we have the so-called personhood bills. Now, these would give full legal rights to a zygote at the moment sperm meets egg. Frankly, I have always wondered, how do they know? (Laughter) The personhood movement not only proposes to redefine pregnancy as occurring at the moment of fertilization, even though up to half of fertilized eggs do not result in a sustainable pregnancy. But also once a zygote, weeks away from a potential pink plus sign on a stick, to be recognized as a complete human being with equal rights, now this would criminalize many of the most common forms of contraception, not to mention the in vitro fertilization treatment and stem cell research, as well as complicate the legality of medical intervention in the event of a life threatening pregnancy.

Now, what I should tell you is that this personhood law was even too extreme for the voters of Mississippi. The voters of Mississippi actually rejected it. What Mitt Romney has said he is for creating legal protections in the Constitution, if necessary, from the moment of conception. Now, either he doesn't really believe that and was saying what he needed to say to get the nomination, or he does believe it, in which case American women and the men in their lives, had better understand what this would mean and we need to explain this to people because Mr. Romney most certainly is not going to.

The future of family planning and a woman's ability to make decisions about her life and her family are not the only things at stake for women in this election. Access, access to healthcare, is on the line. Some states are saying they will not participate in an expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Healthcare Act. That would leave more women outside the safety net. And, of course, Mr. Romney has promised to get rid of this all together. We're already seeing the effects in Texas. Last year, Governor Perry slashed funding for women's health resulting in more than 187,000 women losing access to preventative healthcare this year. And he has effectively sabotaged the Medicaid Women's Health program, which provides preventative care including cancer screenings to 130,000 low income women each year.

Now, earlier this year, Mr. Romney said he would oppose the Blunt Amendment, which would allow any employer to restrict any employee's health coverage based on the employer's religious beliefs. Now, that did not go over too well with the far right. So it took him about an hour to back away from that position and to say that he does, in fact, support the amendment, which would endanger access to contraception for 20 million American women.

Now, Dr. Linda Rosenstock, who is Dean of Public Health School at UCLA and Chair of the nonpartisan Institute of Medicines Committee on Preventative Services for Women, says if every employer could decide what services they thought their employees should get, if we all of a sudden opened up our healthcare system like that, we would wreak havoc. I mean, what if an employer didn't like vaccinations? Some of them don't. We cannot have employers dictating healthcare for individuals.

And there's domestic violence, which affects one in four American women during their lifetime. According to the Justice Department, three women die every day as a result of domestic violence. In the past, the Violence Against Women Act was passed with strong bipartisan support. But right now, its reauthorization is being held up because Republicans in the House of Representatives object to provisions that would strengthen protections for Native American women, immigrant women, and LGBT victims of domestic violence.

And how about fair pay? Women make 77 cents to the dollar relative to men. Now, in 2009, Congress passed President Obama signed, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. It was named for a woman who was discriminated against by her employer for more than two decades but could not get justice because the Supreme Court's conservative majority came up with a creative new way to read laws against job discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Act provides stronger protections for women in the workplace. But some states are now doing the opposite, weakening women's legal protection against discrimination.

It was brought to my attention the other day that the extraordinary money wielded by a few men behind the far right conservative movement is aimed, perhaps, not so much at electing Romney and Ryan, but in fact at winning the Senate. Now, who knows what would happen if that, too, were in Republican hands.

So all right, all right. Why? Hmm? Why? When women are 51 percent for the workforce, 57 percent of higher educational degrees, primary caregivers at home, primary consumer force in the marketplace, why have we done so little to protect ourselves in this political arena, so little to demand equal representation? (Applause) I want you to imagine something with me. Imagine if there was to be one day, say the Monday after Mother's Day, easily communicated now by our social media, when women choose to stay home, not to gather anywhere, or under the aegis of any organization. Just stay home. Just sit down for a day and gather our collective breaths.

Now, you got to imagine what kind of mayhem this means. From the juice in the morning through the commute to the workplace, from the operator room, the courts, television, the national defense, food industry, transportation, all the way through to that goodnight kiss, none of it works without the women of America. Well, we would surely show the country what an essential element we are. But, perhaps more important, we might show ourselves. (Applause)

I hope, I do have hope, that the next generation will be different. People for the American Way Foundation has a young elected official's network. We have hundreds of progressive people who have made it into public office before the age of 35. This includes some exceptional young women who I know will be serving in Congress before long. They are not willing to be complacent or compliant or complicit in letting ideologues determine their health and welfare or restrict their possibilities in life. And we need more women to follow their example. If not to run for office themselves, then to actively take part in this election.

See, I believe women can be in 2012 what the youth was in 2008. I know that all of you might not make it to Arena Stage, so I'm going to give you a little piece of Molly here.

“All right, once upon a time, we had a newspaper editor in Waco named William Brand. Now, he hated three things; can't, hypocrisy and Baptists. He said the only trouble with our Texas Baptists is we do not hold them under water long enough. Now, Brand left us when he was shot in the back by an irate Baptist. Lying on the sidewalk dying, he got to his own gun and blew his murderer to kingdom come. Well, that is one way to get out of town.

But I need more than that. I need a trumpet call here. I need people in the streets banging pots and pans. Do not throw away our legacy out of cynicism or boredom or neglect. You have more political power than 99 percent of the people who have ever lived on this planet. You can vote, you can register others, you can make signs, march. All your life, no matter what else you do, you have another job. You are a citizen. Now politics today stinks. Many love it, I don't. It is rotten. These are some bad, ugly, angry times and I am so freaked out. But politics is not about left or right. It's about up and down. The few screwing the many. It's not too hard to figure how to fix this. Stop letting big money buy our elections. Here's the score now. Every calculating equivocating, triangulating, hair splitting son of a bitch in office today spends half his time whoring after special interest money. If folk were elected by ordinary citizens again, they'd have no one to dance with but us, the people. That'd give me hope.”

I, I have hope that in this election women will be empowered and active for ourselves. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Last month, a federal appeals court ruled that Texas may exclude groups affiliated with abortion providers from the state's Medicaid program for low income women. Now Planned Parenthood is asking the court to reconsider. Do you think the courts are becoming less friendly to reproductive rights?

MS. TURNER: Ha! That's an easy answer. Yes, they are. Unfortunately, one of the things that has not been driven quite as much as it should be in this administration, and I will say that I think President Obama deserves every credit we can possibly give him, and I mean all of it. In any case, let me get to my notes here. But we have not, we have not filled the courts as actively as we could have in this last term with the result that so much of the representation now in the courts and the control of the courts is still in the hands of previous administrations.

In Texas, yes, when he refused to accept the Medicaid under Obamacare, thereby cutting funding to the clinics that provide not only abortion services but a cancer screening, STD, every-- I mean, contraception, every aspect of essential healthcare for a woman, what has resulted and what I have been told just in the last week, is that women

are now crossing over to Mexico to try and get some of the healthcare that they cannot receive in their own country.

MS. WERNER: Planned Parenthood Action Fund hosted a fundraiser at the Democratic Convention, but the organization doesn't reveal their donors. Should Planned Parenthood do more to reveal funding sources? And if not, why not?

MS. TURNER: Well, that's an interesting thought. As we all know, it is no longer a requirement under almost any organization to reveal your donors or where the money comes from. Obviously if that were true, most of our politicians would be in deep trouble, I'll say. I was going to say something else, but this is a nice group. Anyway, in my opinion, yes. I don't see why not.

The only thing that would give me pause would be if people feared that their own reputation or standing in a community might be threatened by this knowledge, public knowledge.

MS. WERNER: Karen Handel, a former PR VP at Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Charity has written a new book *Planned Bullyhood*. She says the charity foundation was subjected to a vicious mugging by Planned Parenthood which she calls a bunch of schoolyard things. Did Planned Parenthood supporters go too far in touching off the firestorm over the Susan G. Komen decision not to give grants to Planned Parenthood?

MS. TURNER: Well, now the woman who wrote that is the same woman who ran for governor of Georgia, is she not? And was the one who ran on the platform of defunding Planned Parenthood and Title X. So gee, ya think she's got a point of view? She lost not only the election, but she lost her position. I was at the L. A. affiliates offices. I was there the day that the Susan G. Komen debacle hit. And the phones were ringing off the hook. And what we heard over and over and over again was what money they had, they were going to send to the Komen Foundation, they were now earmarking to go directly to Planned Parenthood simply because they did not trust that the Komen Foundation would forward the funds they had promised for preventative care and mammograms to Planned Parenthood.

So what actually happened much of the time, I think, and across the country, was people cut out the middleman because they just didn't trust them anymore.

MS. WERNER: Do you have any sense how reproductive rights are doing in the rest of the world? Are women in developing countries getting more family planning help or not?

MS. TURNER: I do have some knowledge of Planned Parenthood International. We have, in many-- for example, I'll bring up the one in Kenya. We have a very thriving clinic there. What I trust most of you know is that most Planned Parenthood affiliates, all Planned Parenthood affiliates, are essentially self supporting, even within our country.

We do have our national Planned Parenthood association which oversees, coordinates and directs all of the work of our affiliates. But we expect the affiliates essentially to be self supporting. The same is true overseas.

Now, this does create a problem. One of the times I came down here to Washington was to lobby for an umbrella, fundraising for an umbrella organization which would include Planned Parenthood International, Helen Keller eye care, it also included CARE, the organization CARE. And the idea was that as the group here in the United States, the United Way, is allowed to deduct from a paycheck, yes, in order to have their funding. We wanted to have the same kind of thing possible for this international giving program, which as I say, encompassed about ten very, very worthy groups.

We were actually beaten down on that by the United Way who did not want anyone else to have such a precedent, such a privilege, even though the funds would have been noncompetitive because our funding was going directly overseas, not to anywhere in the United States. It is a constant struggle and so much of it depends on the well being of the country. You know, whether or not women's healthcare is considered in many places a luxury and certainly far down on the list of the imperatives for that nation's funding.

MS. WERNER: What should we take away from the Virginia state legislators attempt to require ultrasound tests for any women seeking abortion?

MS. TURNER: You know, it's a good thing my daughter's here because I woke up this morning, somebody had brought this up yesterday and I was so bloody angry. I said, "You know what I'm tempted to say?" And she said, "Don't say that, Mom." So, I guess I won't. I will follow my daughter's advice. I think it is a deliberately humiliating abuse. I think that if such a thing were comparable for men, it would be unheard of. I am so angry that I'll stop right now. (Applause) She did stop me, yeah.

MS. WERNER: Speaking of your daughter, in an essay in the AARP bulletin this spring, you wrote about the process of transitioning as a parent of a young adult. You recounted an incident when your mother said to you that your choice of profession was only about yourself. She later apologized. What are some examples from your career that show how actors can touch and change lives?

MS. TURNER: Good heavens. Well, yes, what my mother said was that-- I have an older brother and a older sister, younger brother. My older sister is a doctor of urban sociology and city planning. My older brother is a doctor of psychology, and head of the medical school at University of Idaho. I am a doctor of literature. My younger brother is a doctorate in computer administration and government planning, and he works in New Zealand, in Wellington, for the New Zealand government.

My mother, she does love to have us all together at the same time because she gets to puff up like a cold pigeon, you know, and say, "I'd like you to meet my children,

Dr. Turner, Dr. Turner, Dr. Turner, Dr. Turner.” She just loves that. Anyway, it’s pretty swell we all turned out so well, honestly. But that comment came about because she felt that my siblings were all pursuing fields that would serve the community and other people in some way that I would not. And my response was that if I get the kind of work I intend to and the amount of access to the world, I will have more impact and I will change more lives than they will.

Now, that was a bit of a defensive remark from a 20 year old kid, okay? I’m not putting them down, but yes, I think that there is a great deal, whether it’s the choice of material that I make that I choose to play women who fight, I don’t do victims well, never have. Never have played someone who waits for a man to come along and make things right, never will. I think that the body of work over the years speaks up. Okay.
(Applause)

MS. WERNER: A question here on any advice on how to let children go?

MS. TURNER: Oh, that’s a tough one. Never! Don’t ever let them go! Don’t do it! Anyway, it’s tough, it’s so hard. I mean, for 18 years, you know where they are every day. You know what they’re eating, you know how much sleep they got and who their friends are. And then overnight, you don’t know anything about their lives. You don’t know who their friends are, you don’t know if they’re sleeping, you don’t know what they’re eating. I wrote myself a big note and I had it on the refrigerator in my kitchen when Rachel first went off to college. It said, “Do not call her every day.”

R. TURNER: I have that note.

MS. TURNER: I should have given it to my ex-husband, yeah. Anyway, who is a fabulous father. Anyway, it’s so hard. I mean, most of you know. I think that what really finally comes around is after they get through the college period and are starting their real lives, then you become compatriots, do you know? You’re friends and you can talk about how your lives affect-- how your work affects your lives and how that affects each others’ lives. And that’s really interesting. So it becomes another person in your life rather than a child.

But oh my stars and garters, if the phone rings at 3:00 in the morning, “Huh?” You know that your first thought is, “Is the child all right?” That I cannot imagine will ever change, nor why should it, do you know? Tough.

R. TURNER: I have to stop pocket dialing you.

MS. TURNER: Yeah, don’t pocket dial me anymore, okay?

MS. WERNER: Are people in Hollywood very tuned into this election cycle? If not, why have they lost interest in President Obama?

MS. TURNER: First of all, let me make it entirely clear; I am not Hollywood. I live, and always have lived, in New York City. And I have never lived out in Los Angeles for any length of time longer than it took to complete a film or do a run of a play. The reason I do not live out there and have never chosen to is because to me, it is an incredibly insular and separate society. I like being part of the world. One of the reasons I live in New York is it's the closest I can get to the rest of the world and still be in the United States.

I do not understand these people whose major interests revolve around, and only around, themselves. So don't ask me that question because I can't answer it.

MS. WERNER: How does, or can, your advocacy for Planned Parenthood speak to both liberals and conservatives?

MS. TURNER: We have great common ground. I don't believe anyone who is pro choice, and I will say anti choice, not the other term, because that's crap, no one thinks of abortion as a method of birth control. We don't choose abortion lightly. The idea is to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Planned Parenthood's stand is every child wanted.

Now, where's the problem with these anti choice people? Don't they want the same thing? Which is not to have unintended pregnancies, to make that terrible, terrible decision and all that it implies? Come together, man. Work with us here. You know, we can do this together, I know it. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: How much of the push to restrict women's reproductive rights do you believe is an attempt by men to exclude women from the executive jobs in the workplace? For example, eliminate the competition driven by economics and greed?

MS. TURNER: Okay, I better preface this by saying that I believe wholeheartedly that we, the American people, will ultimately always do the right thing. I believe it because of our hearts, I believe it because of our common sense. So, saying that, you understand I do believe that of us, over the years I've become more and more convinced that men are frightened of women, of our increased ability, of our increasing power, of our increasing position. That they feel essentially threatened as a group. I doubt that you feel that way, perhaps, as individuals. But I think yeah, I think that we scare the hell out of you guys. And what the problem is, you're just going to have to get over it because we can help you, too.

MS. WERNER: Politics aside, do you think Clint Eastwood's empty chair was a stroke of stagecraft brilliance? What would Molly say?

MS. TURNER: I don't think it would be in a public-- she could be polite about that. You got me, guys. That was just-- I got home from the show in time to catch some of that and I just couldn't believe it, I just couldn't believe it. So I run to the computer and I try and pull it up, you know, who's carrying it now? I have no idea what he was

doing. He looks disheveled, he looked disoriented. I'm thinking, "Well," I don't know what I'm thinking. But I do think that it was a damn shame because he is a good man and he's done a great deal in this country and in his life. And this is a terrible thing to be remembered for. I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry.

MS. WERNER: Besides our vote, how do we combat all the distinctive anti-Planned Parenthood and the negative legislation against women's health?

MS. TURNER: The truth is that we know, we know, that the health of a woman is the health of her family. The health of the family creates the health of a community, and so on and so on. The truth is that we are still the primary caregivers and I don't see that changing any time in the near future. So, what one must say is it's not specifically about any one organization. The truth is we desperately need Planned Parenthood because it is the only national source of quality healthcare available to women across the country who cannot afford their own individual doctors and/or insurance.

There is nowhere else to go but Planned Parenthood in most states and most communities. If you take that away, you take away women's ability to care for herself, which means always to care for others. This is what we have to drill into people's heads, not so much that it's any one organization. It is the well being of women and part of that well being now is a strong Planned Parenthood. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Regarding employers such as Catholic hospitals that say they should not be forced to include abortion or birth control in their insurance coverage, how is this different from employers who have insurance policies that have financial disadvantages for smokers?

MS. TURNER: One's religious, one isn't. I think that would be the first glaring-- if I understand the question correctly. I mean, the point is that it's a religious institution, that it wants to choose not to provide services as opposed to a secular institution that is restrictive because of a person's choice to smoke. Is that what I'm understanding? I don't think they're comparable, really. First of all, as I said, and as we know, contraception is a basic healthcare right. It is a necessary basic healthcare right. Smoking is not. Not at all. So I think that religious or not, it should be a part of a package of women's healthcare.

Now, I don't know how to really get into the whole church business. I don't want to. I believe that everyone's belief in this country, their own, are personal and you don't need-- we have freedom of religion in this country. It's not my place to question anyone else's, nor allow mine to be questioned. But I don't think these issues are comparable at all. Don't think they should be in the same question. Whoever asked that, very bad.

MS. WERNER: Many women don't share your perspective on abortion. Isn't there a better way to discuss political issues other than to assume all women share the same point of view?

MS. TURNER: Oh, for heaven sakes. Of course I don't assume all women share the same point of view. And of course I don't expect all women to approve of the choice of abortion. I will reiterate what I said before: common ground. Let's eliminate the problem of choosing an abortion by providing the education and access to contraception that we need.

MS. WERNER: What would you do to change the emphasis from restricting women's rights to restricting men's reproductive abilities with children? After all, they do have two biological parents.

MS. TURNER: You know, I've thought about this. You could take this really far. What if it were illegal for a man to ejaculate unnecessarily? Is that not a form of birth control? Should we not protest this? Does the Bible not say, "Do not waste your seed?" I can just see that going into the legislature, can't you? Yeah, not gonna happen. Look, the truth is that we are never going to have full protection until we have equal representation and until we have a judicial system, again, with the same equal interest towards women.

We are controlled-- we have 17 percent representation in the government, in the Congress and the Senate, I mean the House and the Senate, 17 percent represents our interests, supposedly. We are way, way outnumbered. The only real effective answer is to get more representation. That is what has to be done. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Have you ever considered running for office?

MS. TURNER: Whoa. I've actually been asked, and I have to say that I think I do a much better job acting. I really do. First of all, I love it. I am as passionate about it today as I was when I was 12 and decided that that's what I wanted to do with my life. Don't ask me why I knew at 12 because it made no sense whatsoever. I was living in Caracas, Venezuela. I don't think I'd even been to the theater in my life, but that's what I was going to do. I was going to be an actress and I was going to earn my living as an actress. But I have the same, if not more, passion for it today. It is the study of human behavior. Why did you choose that word, why that thought, why that move? Why is this important to you? This is fascinating stuff and there's no end to it.

And every year I get older, I learn more about my age and my time and other people of my age. So, you see, until I cannot walk and talk and think, I intend to be doing this. That's why.

MS. WERNER: What do you think Margaret Sanger would say about the current backsliding on women's health access and family planning?

MS. TURNER: Well, I don't know if you all know the real-- the history of Margaret Sanger and the beginning-- and the creation of Planned Parenthood? She was originally some 80-some years ago now, she opened a clinic in Brooklyn. And what that clinic did was it taught women the rhythm method. It taught women when they were ovulating and when they were not, when it was safe to have intercourse and when it was

probable that they would get pregnant. The response was the Comstock Laws, which were to make any such teaching illegal. And Margaret Sanger was arrested simply for-- she wasn't passing out any contraception, she was teaching women about their own menstrual cycle and the ovulation period that goes with it.

That's all. And that was considered forbidden knowledge when Margaret Sanger first thought up and started Planned Parenthood. Is it so very different today? I'm not going to say anything more than that.

MS. WERNER: Stemming from your work on Meals on Wheels, many states spend a far larger percent of their long-term care budget on nursing homes instead of services such as home deliverable meals that would allow frail elders to stay in their homes longer. What are your thoughts?

MS. TURNER: One of the things that we've learned in New York City, and we are now feeding-- we provide over two million meals a year through City Meals on Wheels. We have 17,000 full time clients and this does not count the added holiday meals and summer and winter emergency packages that we provide in case of power outages and that sort of thing. But one of the things we've learned is that it depends so drastically on the topography. We can do this in New York City because we will have clientele, we will have-- oh, my area, you can kind of adopt an area-- my area is sort of what was Hell's Kitchen, where is where a lot of the old dancers and performers and everything retired to because it's around the theater district. The problem is, their rent controlled apartments are now on the 4th or 5th floors of a walk up. They can't get out.

Now, if you've got some money in New York, you can have something delivered, which is nice. But most, we're not talking about people with that kind of luxury. So they are essentially trapped. They cannot give up their apartment because they cannot afford anything else. But they cannot leave, they're literally trapped at the same time. In a suburban or wider area where we're talking deliveries that are widespread, you're getting into gas, you're getting into scheduling, you're getting into a whole mess of stuff that we don't have to deal with in New York City because we are so close to each other. I would assume it would depend hugely on what the circumstances of the community are.

MS. WERNER: We're almost out of time, but before I get to the last couple of questions, we have a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I'd like to remind you of some upcoming speakers. Tomorrow, we have Bruce Allen, general manager of the Washington Redskins, will discuss the team's upcoming season. On September 12th, Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council will discuss the roles of values in the November elections. And on September 13th, James P. Hoffa, President of International Brotherhood of Teamsters will discuss defining patriotism, protecting America and the American worker.

Second, I'd like to present our guest with our traditional National Press Club coffee mug, great for coffee when you're trying to get going in the mornings.

MS. TURNER: Excellent, thank you.

MS. WERNER: Couple last questions for you. When you filmed the “Body Heat,” were you aware then that it would become a classic and that an entire generation of young men would never forget you?

MS. TURNER: I would like to point out, you know, regretfully in a way, that that film is now 31 years old. I'm sorry. However, I am told that the breaking in of the glass moment is still considered the number one sexiest moment in film. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: And lastly, I would like to ask you what is your favorite Molly Ivins quote?

MS. TURNER: Okay, I'll give you the one that is becoming more and more a part of my everyday life. She says, “You see, I am an optimist to the point of idiocy.” (Applause) Thank you.

MS. WERNER: Thank you all for coming today. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff including the Journalism Institute and the Broadcast Center for organizing today's event. Finally, a reminder that you can find more information about the National Press Club on our website. Also, if you'd like to get a copy of today's program, please check out our website at www.press.org. Thank you, and we're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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