

# Spare Me Your Faux “Women’s Health”



## Legislation -- Please

By Jan Collins

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It’s an election year, and that means that many South Carolina legislators think it’s prudent to hedge their re-election bets by passing laws to “chip away at safe and legal abortion” in the state, as one observer put it.

Earlier this month, the S.C. Senate approved a compromise bill banning abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy or later. (Abortion had been legal in South Carolina through 24 weeks of pregnancy, as permitted by a 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision.)

If the bill passes House of Representatives and is signed by Gov. Nikki Haley, as supporters expect, abortion after 20 weeks would be permitted only for cases of severe fetal anomalies or to save the life of the mother. There would be no exceptions for rape or incest.

I presume that none of the men who voted for this bill has ever been pregnant as the result of rape or incest.

Ten other bills that would restrict safe and legal abortion in South Carolina were pre-filed before the current legislative session even began. One of those bills, which would sever all ties between the state and Planned Parenthood, and also other entities that fund or perform abortions, has 34 co-sponsors. One of them is House Speaker Jay Lucas.

Anti-women’s health legislation, therefore, is once again masquerading as a way to protect women’s well-being. And this is why a bill introduced this session by Democratic State Representative Mia McLeod is so delicious.

McLeod’s bill – *which cross my heart and hope to die would protect men’s health* -- would mandate that a man who wants a prescription for any erectile dysfunction drug such as Cialis or Viagra would have to get a notarized affidavit from at least one sexual partner that the drug is necessary, undergo a cardiac stress test, receive

sexual counseling, and hang around for a 24-hour waiting period, among other measures.

What's good for the goose is absolutely, positively good for the gander, Rep. McLeod is saying. How does it feel, she is asking South Carolina's male-dominated legislature, to have your reproductive rights put in the bulls' eye?

Fed-up female legislators in other states, including Ohio, Virginia, Illinois, Oklahoma, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, have introduced similar bills in the past few years. Rep. Stacey Newman in Missouri introduced novel legislation that would treat Missourians seeking to buy firearms the same way it treats Missourians seeking an abortion. There would, for example, be a 72-hour waiting period.

But - surprise! Since all state legislatures in this country are male-dominated, not one of these bills has become law. Especially **not** the amendment introduced in the Oklahoma Senate in 2012 when that legislative body was debating a "personhood" bill stipulating that life begins at the moment of conception. As former State Senator Constance Johnson, a Democrat who introduced the amendment that would have outlawed masturbation, explained wryly: "If we're talking about protecting life, then let's talk about life at its very basic beginning."

Well, she does have a point.

Johnson's amendment, of course, failed. But fair warning: there is a similar "personhood" bill currently ensconced in committee in the South Carolina legislature, just pining for an amendment similar to Johnson's to be introduced as a companion measure.

Finally, while we're on the subject of women's health, let's talk about the Cervical Cancer Prevention Act. This legislation would enable the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to offer the cervical cancer vaccine to students enrolling in the seventh grade of any public or private school in South Carolina. It would also provide parents and guardians with print information on the HPV vaccine.

Cervical cancer kills an average of five women each month in South Carolina. Almost all cervical cancer is caused by the HPV virus. Therefore, wouldn't any sentient being want to make the HPV vaccine available to our young people before they become sexually active?

Uh, no. Republican Senator Lee Bright of Spartanburg, who is male and therefore can't get cervical cancer (although men and boys can contract a throat cancer caused by the HPV virus), has placed a "minority report" – in effect, a hold – on the bill, halting its progress.

If he removes his objection, according to the advocacy group Tell Them!, the legislation would fly through the third and final reading of the bill, go back to the House where supporters are confident they have the votes to pass it, and then alight on the desk of the governor, who supports this version of the bill.

If you think Senator Bright should do the bright thing, and the right thing, and withdraw his objection to the Cervical Cancer Prevention Act, please telephone his office and tell him so. Or, you can click on this link to help you make the call: <http://p2a.co/Orn7glc>

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