

OPINION

Feels Good to Win Decisive Battle

Upholding the health care mandate

BY MARTHA BURK

The unprecedented attack on women's health hit a roadblock on June 27, when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, effectively upholding the entire law. It was a big win for women.

In upholding Obama's landmark health care reform, the Roberts Court threw a hand grenade at the conservatives waging an unrelenting "war on



women" that uses access to health care as its main battering ram. The decision may not stop the war, but it surely feels good to win such a decisive battle.

The law, which benefits virtually all Americans, scored these big wins for women:

Reproductive Care: Birth control will be covered as a preventative

measure without co-pays. Yes, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will continue their assault on this basic service, but they're now less likely to prevail. Other very important, but less divisive, preventative services like pap smears, mammograms, and domestic violence screenings must also

be covered without co-pays.

Security: The law prohibits denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions. Insurance companies have reached far and wide on this one, refusing coverage for such "pre-existing conditions" as having had a caesarean section — a procedure which accounts for one out of three U.S. births — or being a victim of sexual assault or domestic battering.

Motherhood: Maternity coverage will now be mandated. A widespread myth about health coverage has been that maternity coverage is generally available — it just costs more. A corollary myth is that women's coverage costs more because of maternity coverage. Not so. According to the National Women's Law Cen-

ter, almost 90 percent of independent market-share policies exclude maternity coverage altogether. They don't provide it at any cost. Nursing mothers who work for large employers will also benefit, as they will now be able to have breaks and a private place to pump breast milk.

Equality: Flat-out sex discrimination in coverage and pricing will no longer be allowed. The Affordable Care Act prohibits the widespread practice of charging women higher premiums than they charge men of the same age for the same coverage. This is known as "gender rating," and the usual excuse is that women are more likely to get check-ups. The law makes any kind of sex discrimination in plans that get federal support a no-no, including

policies in the new insurance exchanges.

The one place women may lose out is in expanded Medicaid coverage, since the court's decision said the feds can't threaten to take away existing Medicaid funding (which primarily benefits women and children) if states refuse to expand their Medicaid programs.

Still, the Supreme Court handed women a huge victory. In a continuing war with no end in sight, it's a welcome one.

Martha Burk is the director of the Corporate Accountability Project for the National Council of Women's Organizations and the author of the book *Your Voice, Your Vote: The Savvy Woman's Guide to Power, Politics, and the Change We Need*.

Investing in a Worldwide Holocaust

The truth about nuclear weapons

BY PETER G. COHEN

It is time to tell the truth about nuclear weapons. They are not a deterrent to terrorists, whom security experts regard as the greatest danger to our nation. They do not deter attacks from other nations, because very few want to attack us, and our overwhelming conventional forces are more than enough for our defense.

What nuclear weapons actually do is cost us a great deal of money. Just to maintain the warheads will cost us \$7.6 billion next year and \$2.5 billion more to prevent proliferation.

As we trim our federal budget, other urgently needed programs will be cut, while nuclear weapons funds are defended in the name of National Security and for the benefit of senators and representatives who have facilities in their districts. Some Congress

people hope to spend at least \$100 billion in the next decade on "modernizing" the planes, missiles and submarines that are ready to deliver the warheads to an unidentified "enemy."

Nuclear weapons are completely indiscriminate. They incinerate adults, children and pets in the target area without regard for innocence or guilt. The radioactive fallout drifts for miles on the shifting winds and all scientific studies done since Chernobyl and now Fukushima, acknowledge that, even though mortality figures differ.

Even the Pentagon acknowledges that a relatively "limited" nuclear war would create so much radioactive soot that it would drift around the earth for years, blocking the sun and reducing crop yields, thus causing widespread famine.

At the same time, the great heat of a nuclear fireball and the following firestorm carries radioactive materials into the stratosphere, where they fatally weaken the ozone layer, causing blindness, skin cancer, and damaged immune systems. It would also destroy aquatic ecosystems, resulting in reduced ocean productivity for years.

For those who are concerned that a nation might try to cheat a Nuclear Weapons Convention, a world system of sensors is now in place. While it is almost impossible to produce a nuclear weapon without testing, this worldwide system will make any nuclear weapons test immediately known to all.

The generals and admirals, the senators and representatives, the nuclear laboratories and plants, believe that they are defending America. Their experts can calculate the kilotons and megatons of explosive power in each of the weapons systems. But they do not

represent the human future, or the millions who would disappear instantly in the fireball or slowly succumb to radiation disease.

It is up to people of conscience to make their voices heard. It is up to mothers and grandmothers to say that it is intolerable and criminal that more than 20-years after the end of the Cold War, Russia and the United States still have more than 3,300 warheads targeted on each other, and thousands more that can quickly be brought back and deployed.

If we love money more than life, as some supporters of "modernizing" our nuclear weapons and facilities seem to do, then we must accept the idea that we, or our children and grandchildren, sooner or later, will be incinerated in a flash, poisoned by radioactive fallout, or sick and starved in misery by a nuclear winter.

As long as we persist in having these weapons, we are investing

in a worldwide holocaust that will incinerate, sterilize and starve distant people who have nothing to do with the nations involved in the war, accident, or act of nature that detonates these weapons.

The Creator has given us this beautiful, abundant planet and the miracle of human life. Human cleverness has provided us with the tools of worldwide suicide.

Can we admit that we have gone too far? That human, mechanical or natural failures can plunge us into the final fire? That the only recourse is to overcome our fears, our dream of domination, and our attachment to the profits of death? Only then can the United States take the lead in freeing the world of these suicidal weapons. A superpower of the future would demonstrate super humility and get the job done.

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