



January 2024 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues Newsletter
<https://womensclearinghouse.org>

Meeting Invitation: Reforming the Federal Judiciary: Expand the Supreme Court, Limit Terms, Restore Legitimacy

Tuesday, January 23, 2024 Noon – 1:00 PM

Zoom Meeting Registration Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcscuusqTMuHNEp2K7Sy4bVHIYHW7T8k7IS>

Please share this invitation and join CWI. Meetings are public and free of charge.

Approval of the Supreme Court remains at [a historic low](#). This follows [polling last term](#) finding that about half of Americans view the Court unfavorably and would describe the Court as “corrupt” and “unaccountable.” The same proportion, 48 percent, said that the Court is making decisions to take away their freedoms.

In just the past two years, the conservative supermajority, led by justices placed on the Court by Donald Trump, has overturned laws on abortion, gun control, voting rights, affirmative action, executive power, and privileging religious views to permit discrimination in public spaces.

As [revelations](#) about certain justices receiving elaborate gifts and failing to report gifts and spousal income as required mount, the legitimacy of the Supreme Court has come into serious question. Despite public and congressional scrutiny, the Supreme Court remains resistant to adopting [an enforceable code of ethics](#).

Calls to reform the Court are growing louder. One change often suggested is to expand the number of justices, perhaps adding four more justices to the current nine. Another [possible avenue of reform](#) would limit justices' active terms to 18 years, rather than allowing for lifetime appointments. A Presidential Commission studied these and other options and [issued a report](#) in 2021.

In addition to support for reform at the country's highest court, there is increasing recognition that our system of federal circuit and district courts needs serious updating. Two speakers grounded in these concerns and possible solutions will speak at the Tuesday, January 23, 2024 CWI meeting.

CHRIS KANG - Chris Kang is Co-founder of Demand Justice (<https://demandjustice.org>) and former Chief Counsel of the organization. Demand Justice is an advocacy organization which aims to inform and empower citizens to fight for progressive change in our judicial systems. Chris serves on the Board of Advisors for the American Constitution Society and was [invited to testify](#) before the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court.

Chris served in the Obama White House for nearly seven years in key roles. He was Deputy Counsel to the President as well as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. Chris oversaw the selection, vetting, and confirmation of more than 220 of the president's judicial nominees—who set records for the most people of color, women, and openly gay and lesbian judges appointed by a president. In the Office of Legislative Affairs, as an advocate for the administration before Congress, Chris helped spearhead the confirmations of Supreme Court Justices Sotomayor and Kagan, the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, and passage of the Fair Sentencing Act, which reduced the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine offenses.

Chris also served as National Director of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and worked for U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Richard Durbin, of Illinois, as Director of Floor Operations, Judiciary Committee Counsel, and Counsel for labor issues.

The organization Chris co-founded, Demand Justice, is working to restore balance to the courts by reforming the Supreme Court, expanding the circuit and district courts, and championing new judges with experience as public defenders, civil rights lawyers, legal aid lawyers, and labor lawyers who represent working people. Demand Justice first endorsed Supreme Court expansion in 2018 and called for a freeze on the appointment of corporate lawyers to the federal bench in August of 2019. Demand Justice publishes an informative Daily Supreme Court News Briefing which reports on cases before the Court and related media coverage.

REBECCA BUCKWALTER-POZA - Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza is Aron Senior Justice Counsel at the Alliance for Justice. (<https://afj.org>). An advocate, attorney, and author, Rebecca is best known for successfully suing the forty-fifth president of the United States under the First Amendment with Columbia University's Knight First Amendment Institute.

A second-generation American and two-decade veteran of Washington, Rebecca has worked on progressive campaigns and policy projects on five continents, including as a Luce Scholar at Hong Kong's Asian Human Rights Commission and as Deputy National Press Secretary of the Democratic National Committee during President Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign.

Rebecca went on to direct access to justice project Making Justice Equal at the Center for American Progress, cover the Supreme Court and federal judiciary at NPR with Legal Affairs Correspondent Nina Totenberg, and originate the role of Judicial Affairs Editor at *Daily Kos*. She is a co-founder of *Prism*, a publication that elevates stories, ideas, and solutions from the underrepresented leaders, thinkers, and activists whose voices are critical to a reflective democracy.

Rebecca received her A.B. from Harvard College and her J.D. from Yale Law School. A student of military law who observed at Guantanamo, Rebecca clerked for the Honorable Margaret Ryan on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces as well as the late Honorable Juan R. Torruella on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

The next CWI meeting on Election Reforms is February 27, 2024 at noon on zoom.

Summary of Oct 24, 2023 CWI Meeting on “The National Women’s Health Network with a focus on Mifepristone”

Kristen Batstone, the policy manager at the National Women’s Health Network, presented on a recent court decision and how it threatens the national availability of Mifepristone, one of two abortion pill medications for more than half of abortions in the US. Due to a stay issued by the Supreme Court, abortion pills are still available during judicial proceedings, but a similar decision from the Supreme Court could have a devastating impact on abortion access. Even if the Supreme Court sides with abortion advocates and upholds recent FDA guidance that allows Mifepristone to be dispensed through the mail and retail pharmacies, Mifepristone access is not guaranteed due to efforts to codify abortion pill bans at the state and federal level. Regardless of actions taken by courts and Congress, abortion pills will still be available by mail in all 50 states, even in states that ban abortion care. This presentation discussed how we got to the most recent 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, and where we go from here. More information on Kristen’s background is in the Oct. 2023 CWI newsletter meeting invitation.

[Kristen Batstone’s Mife presentation](https://nwhn.org/mifepristonecase2023/) was based on her August 2023 article: <https://nwhn.org/mifepristonecase2023/>

A Link for NWHN's statement on December 13 urging the Supreme Court to validate the safety of mifepristone as it prepares to hear oral arguments in *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine et al v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration*. <https://nwhn.org/the-nwhn-urges-the-supreme-court-to-validate-the-safety-of-mifepristone/>

In addition to Kristen Batstone's substantive information on mifepristone, the video of the meeting where we were also able to learn about the other critically important work of the National Women's Health Network from Denise Hyater Lindenmuth, Executive Director of the National Women's Health Network and Vice President for Women's Health at the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues and Laura Tucker, NWHN's Director of Development. This video recording of the CWI [Oct. 2023 Meeting: "The National Women's Health Network with a focus on Mifepristone"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TZAqxjip4g) with Denise Hyater-Lindenmuth, Kristen Batstone, and Laura Tucker is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TZAqxjip4g>.

The National Women's Health Network was founded in 1975, as a consumer watchdog organization that changes the way the medical establishment listens to women. It has thousands of institutional and organizational members. A donation of \$25 also provides a 12 month membership and other benefits. Special topics of interest include: aging women, maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, abortion, contraception, disability, FDA advocacy, breast health, chronic conditions, LGBTQAI health, mental health and wellbeing, and the social determinants of health. NWHN also analyzes and supports bills and monitors appropriations related to women's health. It also provides many resources in its key topic areas on its website (NWHN.org).

Arts and Culture Opportunities

ART MUSEUMS

The National Museum of Women in the Arts reopened on Oct 21 with exhibition *The Sky's The Limit* (to Feb. 25, 2024)

Smithsonian American Art Museum presents *Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas* (to June 2, 2024)

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden will present an exhibit by Simon Leigh (to March 3, 2024)

The Baltimore Museum of Art exhibit *Work: Women Printmakers of the WPA*, (to June 30, 2024).

THEATER

Tempestuous Elements (February 16 - March 17, 2024) at Arena Stage

is the story of Anna Julia Cooper. Born in slavery, the visionary Black feminist and educator in the late 19th/early 20th centuries, was only the fourth African American woman to earn a doctoral degree. The 11th in Arena Stage's Power Play cycle, *Tempestuous Elements* shines a light on Cooper's tumultuous tenure as Principal of Washington, D.C.'s historic M Street School where she fought to keep Black education alive, despite the racism, gossip and sexism that threatened to consign her efforts to obscurity.

CWI's newsletter is endowed in loving memory of our previous longtime editor, Roslyn Kaiser

Newsletter edited by Sue Klein

CWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JULY 2023- JUNE 2025

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February 2024 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues Newsletter (CWI)
<https://womensclearinghouse.org>

Meeting Invitation: Rethinking Women's Political Power: Recognizing and Overcoming Challenges to Incumbents, Candidates, Voters and Election Officers

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Jan Erickson, Government Relations Director, National Organization for Women, NOW and Co-President CWI and **Connie Cordovilla**, Fairfax County Election Officer and Vice President CWI will moderate this meeting.

Presenters include:



Dr. Kelly Dittmar, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University–Camden; and Director of Research and a Scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University (<https://cawp.rutgers.edu>). Kelly authored the recently released report “Rethinking Women’s Political Power.” The Report <https://rethinkingpower.rutgers.edu/> examines at the state and local level (1) women’s navigation of the political ecosystem; (2) perceptions about women’s political power and progress, (3) an assessment of the support infrastructure for women in politics in the state (including its service of women across party and racial/ethnic lines); (4) views on the strength and influence of political parties in the state; (5) perceptions on where and with whom political power lies in the state; and (6) insights into opportunities for increasing women’s political power.



Dr. Maya Kornberg, Ph.D. is a research fellow in the Brennan Center for Justice’s Elections and Government Program, where she leads work related to information and disinformation in politics, Congress, civic engagement, and money in politics. Maya is also the author of the recent book “Inside Congressional Committees: Function and Dysfunction in the Legislative Process” (Columbia University Press, 2023.) She will be presenting the new Brennan Center report entitled “Intimidation of State and Local Officeholders: The Threat to Democracy,” which she recently co-authored. The report explores hostility faced by local and state officeholders in the United States. The results show that the majority of state and local officials surveyed face hostility, with women and people of color reporting higher levels of violence than their white male colleagues. Many electeds are worried about their family and staff (with women and people of color expressing more concern.) The impact on democracy is also worrisome. A critical mass of respondents shared that they are reluctant to engage with constituents, take on controversial issues, and run for higher office. The research highlights important trends in a growing problem for American democracy. The report also details a number of recommendations for combatting this trend.

The next CWI meeting is March 26, 2024 at noon on zoom and in person to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of CWI, Ms. Magazine and other feminist organizations.

Resource Sheet For Fighting the Intimidation of Voters and Election Officers:

Brennan Center Reports on Intimidation of Office Holders, Election Workers and Voters

Intimidation of Voters and Election Workers Resource Guide- <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voter-intimidation-and-election-worker-intimidation-resource-guide>

Another Barrier to Latino Representation: Intimidation of Election Officials—
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/another-barrier-latino-representation-intimidation-election-officials>

Intimidation of State and Local Officeholders <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/intimidation-state-and-local-officeholders>

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Know Your Rights: Voter Intimidation
https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_pdf_file/kyr-voterintimidation-v03.pdf

Georgetown Law School, Fact Sheet: Protecting Against Voter Intimidation
<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/icap/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/10/Voter-Intimidation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Advancement Project, What to Do if You Experience Intimidation at the Polls
<https://advancementproject.org/what-to-do-if-you-experience-intimidation-at-the-polls/>

United States Election Assistance Commission, Security Resources for Election Officials
<https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/election-official-security>

Brookings Institution, One Way to Protect Female Election Officials from Harassment
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/one-way-to-protect-female-election-officials-from-harassment/>

Summary of January 23, 2024 CWI Meeting on “Reforming the Federal Judiciary: Expand the Supreme Court, Limit Terms, Restore Legitimacy”

The video of this excellent meeting is available on the CWI website at [Jan 2024 Meeting: Reforming the Federal Judiciary: Expand the Supreme Court, Limit Terms, Restore Legitimacy with Chris Kang and Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza](#).

Moderator **Jeanette Lim Esbrook**, CWI Vice President for Legal Affairs, opened by noting that the U.S. Supreme Court has a low public approval rating. Our speakers will address possible responses to their ethical lapses. Jeanette is concerned about several of the many very important cases before the Court: one is a constitutional provision that prohibits a person who has engaged in insurrection from holding public office and another is whether there is a broad definition of immunity for officeholders and the third relates to authority of administrative agencies to determine the implementation of the law.

CHRIS KANG - Chris Kang is Co-founder of Demand Justice and former Chief Counsel of the organization. Demand Justice is an advocacy organization which aims to inform and empower citizens to fight for progressive change in our judicial systems. Chris serves on the Board of Advisors for the American Constitution Society and was [invited to testify](#) before the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court. Chris served in the Obama White House for nearly seven years in key roles. He was Deputy Counsel to the President as well as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. Chris oversaw the selection, vetting, and confirmation of more than 220 of the president’s judicial nominees. This set

records for the most people of color, women, and openly gay and lesbian judges appointed by a president. Demand Justice endorsed Supreme Court expansion and called for a freeze on the appointment of corporate lawyers to the federal bench in August 2023. Demand Justice publishes an informative Daily Supreme Court News Briefing which reports on important cases before the Court and related media coverage.



Chris called attention to ‘What’s wrong is not just the Supreme Court’s decisions, but what is motivating them.’ In his view, the conservative supermajority of justices most often rules in favor of corporate and special interests. In recent decades, the Court has been anti-democracy -- striking down voting rights and upholding gerrymandering are two examples. The problem is that the Court is too political as well as too powerful. Not only by revoking a nearly fifty-year old right in protecting women’s reproductive rights but making it hard to do anything about gun violence, climate change, and other important problems. The Court is causing more damage and decreasing protections -- whether it’s medication abortion, LGBTQ rights, or other important protections.

Regarding the upcoming Chevron deference case: When Congress passes a law, federal agencies implement; for forty years courts have turned to agencies because agencies have the technical expertise. But now, all of the pro-democracy, pro-environment, pro-individual rights regulations that federal agencies have adopted -- the conservatives on the Court want to strike them down.

We need to determine how much power we want to give the courts. The traditional ‘Checks and Balances’ are not happening. The courts are grabbing more power for themselves, and they even want to be above any criticism. When it comes down to ethical lapses, the justices are refusing to disclose and refusing to stop doing what many believe are unethical activities. We are seeing more corruption and clear conflicts of interest. Look at Justice Thomas ruling on a case related to the January 6, 2021, insurrection when his wife, Ginni Thomas, was involved. He won’t even disclose the gifts he has received. SCOTUS is the only court that is not subject to an enforceable Code of Ethics.

Conservative activism around the courts began with opposition to *Brown v. Board* (separate is not equal) and *Roe v. Wade*, recognizing women’s right to abortion. This combination of racism and misogyny was combined with corporate interests and funded by conservative billionaires who sought to shape the federal judiciary. Over that same time, Democrats have not been politically engaged around the Court, possibly with the view that they should not stoop as low. The problem is that the other side is ramping up their agenda.

We need to enact several reforms of the Supreme Court in tandem. The first is Supreme Court expansion – which can be achieved by a simple act of Congress. Legislation has been introduced: the Judiciary Act (S. 1616/ H.R. 3422) which would add four justices to the Supreme Court. These additions would offset the Republican ‘theft’ of two seats. First was when President Obama was denied his nominee, Merrick Garland. The second was when President Biden was denied a nominee following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The Republicans pushed through just before a general election their nominee Amy Coney Barrett, bringing about a super-majority of six very conservative justices. A counter to this super majority would be an addition of four justices to the nine sitting justices, producing more of a balance on the high court.

Term limits would do much to counter corruption. A limit of 18 years would provide some regularity. With that reform, the Court will begin to reflect the nation’s will. The current life term is set by the Constitution. Bipartisan constitutional scholars argue that Congress can pass a law to change the term, but the problem is that the sitting justices would ultimately decide, and they are loath to give up their life terms. But if we first pass legislation adding four justices, that might help ensure the constitutionality of term limits is given fair consideration.

An enforceable code of ethics must be adopted – this is a bare minimum step to show some sort of accountability. Congress must pass the necessary legislation. We must get out of the mindset we can only do one. All three pillars of reform are necessary.

We spend so much time thinking about the Supreme Court, but there also needs to be more attention on the lower federal courts. The lower courts don't get that much attention, but just look at the court in Florida, with a Trump acolyte-judge handling the Trump classified documents case.

Who sits on these courts is a serious question. During my time in the Obama administration, there was an emphasis on demographic diversity. President Biden has recognized that we also need more lawyers with a variety of professional backgrounds, not just former prosecutors and corporate lawyers. More labor lawyers, public defenders, civil rights lawyers, and legal aid lawyers – those who represent the people. We should be talking to our friends, neighbors, and members of Congress about these concerns.

REBECCA BUCKWALTER-POZA - Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza is Senior Fellow and Senior Aron Justice Counsel at the Alliance for Justice. An advocate, attorney, and author, Rebecca is best known for successfully suing the forty-fifth president of the United States under the First Amendment with Columbia University's Knight First Amendment Institute. Rebecca directed the access to justice project 'Making Justice Equal' at the Center for American Progress, covered the Supreme Court and federal judiciary at NPR with Legal Affairs Correspondent Nina Totenberg, and originated the role of Judicial Affairs Editor at *Daily Kos*. She is a co-founder of *Prism*, a publication that elevates stories, ideas, and solutions from the underrepresented leaders, thinkers, and activists whose voices are critical to a reflective democracy. Rebecca received her A.B. from Harvard College and her J.D. from Yale Law School. A student of military law who observed at Guantanamo, Rebecca clerked for the Honorable Margaret Ryan on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces as well as the late Honorable Juan R. Torruella on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.



I must begin on a sad note, that is the deterioration of the federal judiciary and justice in the country. It is now obvious that the Supreme Court is becoming more aware of the legitimacy crisis and ethical failures it has inherited and precipitated. Even Justices Kavanaugh and Coney Barrett have said they support embracing a code of ethics. Currently there is no mechanism for accountability. Within the Court's new ethics code, there is the telling language: "should" instead of shall", for instance. These are provisions that should be binding.

There is no required recusal or reporting of recusals; the details of ethical crises need reporting. These concerns are particularly problematic with Justice Thomas who failed to report numerous large gifts such as vacations on private jets, yachts and failed to report his wife's substantial income. Ginni Thomas is a leader in conservative causes, such as the Tea Party and January 6th insurrection. Justice Roberts' wife is making money from companies that have cases before the court. Justices own stocks that present conflicts of interest. There doesn't seem to be any awareness for reporting or consideration that they should give up the stocks. Which leads to what Chris suggested, congressional intervention or action by the federal judiciary's Administrative Office or the Department of Justice that could address this – they, too, could be players. We have yet to see that.

There is an overburdening of the judiciary and a significant backlog of cases. Just as the Court has challenged all precedents, Congress has blocked expansion of courts to match caseload. There is also the problem of single-judge district courts – which has led to judge-shopping. Conservatives know where they can go to get the result they want. Until the 1990s it was traditional for Congress to expand the number of courts related to population growth. Currently we have problems with single-judge districts which are being abused by right wing activists. A single judgeship most recently noted was that of Judge Kacsmaryk (who is an anti-abortion activist). Expansion of the courts would help tremendously.

There has been a long-term investment by the political right in state courts which has paid off by offering the conservatives the opportunity to place the judges they want. This has facilitated an array of conservative causes, such as advancing anti-abortion rights legislation. Their goal has been to reshape the judiciary state by state and attack judges that don't rule in the way they want. One example last year is when Janet Protasiewicz, supported by Democrats, defeated the Republican antiabortion rights candidate, and was elected to the State Supreme Court in Wisconsin. Her

candidacy was met with serious threats. Anita Earls, an African American woman who is associate justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, was attacked through the mechanism for judicial ethics when she offered a comment about diversity. The state launched an investigation of the associate justice after she made that comment. The political right goes after judges with whom they do not agree.

The problem of so many cases originating in state courts intensified during the Covid shutdown. Ninety-five percent of cases go through state courts, rather than federal – so that is a concern. Another structural problem is that conservatives have been changing types of judges to get the result they want. In addition, they have been pushing litigators toward arbitration. This is part of the long-term investment by the political right. We've seen since *Dobbs* an outcry by abortion rights supporters. More than forty pieces of legislation have been introduced to protect abortion rights in twenty-three states. In response, conservatives are expanding courts in states with Republican governors – which is an enormous threat.

We need effective ethics codes at all levels. Thomas allows friends to buy his mother's house, planning eventually to turn it into a museum celebrating his career. Plus, they paid his grandnephew's school tuition. Thomas also suggested to his wealthy friends that he needed monetary gifts because he wasn't earning enough as a Supreme Court justice.

Some of the media coverage of these problems suggests that there is a both-sides element – that is just not accurate. It's just not the same. Justice Kagan worried about getting free bagels; Justice Thomas is jaunting around the world in private jets and yachts, letting wealthy friends purchase his mother's home. Additionally, Justice Thomas accepted a bible worth five figures and used the Court itself for a reception for one of the organizations in which he has become a leader.

Q & A:

The last time that Congress addressed the courts was in 1990 with the Judicial Improvements Act. This added 13 temporary judgeships in addition to the 94 district courts, 13 circuit courts, 179 appellate judgeships, and 673 district court judgeships. That's not nearly enough.

Many cases are now being re-routed into federal courts. Yet the federal judiciary has not grown. Legislation has been introduced to increase courts based on filings and population and in support of a term limits bill. One option is to require judges to take senior status, creating additional judicial positions.

The backlog facing federal courts is over 600,000 cases. All of this puts justice further out of reach for average Americans. Since 1990, the population has grown by more than 40 percent. It's a problem only Congress can fix and is well overdue. Rep. Hank Johnson is behind the effort, recalculating the number of courts and establishing term limits.

President Trump added 234 lifetime judges to federal courts via Article III judgeships. President Biden is at 168 judgeships; Trump was at 187 at this point in his administration. But President Biden's nominees include two-thirds people of color or women, and that's a very big deal, but we're still falling behind. Trump's nominees were extremely political.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse's book, [The Scheme](#), which describes the right Wing's effort to capture the courts was mentioned. Chris Kang says Sen. Whitehouse is right. It's all about special interests and about capturing courts for a small minority to impose their views on the rest of us.

Chris noted that anti-DEI and anti-affirmative action attacks are all about special interests to capture the court. The economic cases just don't get as much attention as the social issues. The issues corporate interests focus on, generally, are whether corporations should be held accountable for defective products, for discrimination, and be allowed to continue merging and have more power.

These are the 80/20 issues – 80 percent of public supports limiting corporate power. The same 80 percent support abortion rights, gun control and doing something about climate change. The American public wants more control of

corporate interests. But these economic cases just don't get enough attention. The Roberts Court is the most corporate court in generations.

If the Judiciary Act were adopted tomorrow, people suggest that conservatives would re-capture the Court by adding more seats later. But I don't see it that way. If we don't make the effort to counteract conservative capture now, we will have conservative, anti-government, anti-democracy courts for another thirty to forty years and beyond. This will have such a negative effect on our democracy.

It's important to restore balance, rein in corporate power, bring about a stronger democracy and less gerrymandering. A lot of folks think that expanding the court is so controversial. However, a majority of the public supports expansion; 70 percent of Democrats are supportive. We need to start speaking out now that we have this support, Chris urged.

The House and Senate judiciary committees have the jurisdiction to reform the court. We are seeing a little bit of interest in Congress now, but mainly focused on ethics problems. The Senate has authorized subpoenas to question major right-wing funders Harlan Crow and Leonard Leo about their gifts and financial support to sitting Supreme Court justices.

Judicial reform legislation has not had enough support in both Houses, and they haven't taken the time to focus on it. On the House side, there are 60 members who support the Judiciary Act, but only three in the Senate. That is where the activism is needed.

Rebecca noted this in response to a question about the case backload. In the first year of Covid, it was nearly 400,000; the second year, it was 600,000. The Judicial Conference made an adjustment so that it doesn't look so bad with a watered-down proposal from the Judicial Conference. They proposed two new appellate judgeships and at least 66 new district judgeships, plus making temporary judges permanent. But this is not nearly enough.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH HALL OF FAME TRIBUTE BY THE KINDERMAN

This was sent by Loretto Gubernatis, CWI Vice President for Media Outreach.

Please celebrate Black History Month and enjoy the video at https://youtu.be/1PQhPws_Xu0

Invitation to Major Feminist Conference in DC area March 23-25

The Feminist Majority Foundation's National Young Feminist Leadership Conference is returning to DC after 4 years! The 2024 NYFLC brings together student activists to build collective power and share strategies of resistance, grow knowledge about critical domestic and global feminist issues, learn hands-on grassroots organizing tactics, and mobilize for political gain. NYFLC is a chance to recognize that we are a part of something big, a community of activists working for justice all around the country. It's the perfect place to learn about current political issues, hear from inspirational leaders, and meet fellow feminist students! Find more information and register at <https://feministcampus.org/conference/> Please encourage high school and college feminists to attend but all feminists are welcome!



The National Young Feminist Leadership Conference (NYFLC) brings together hundreds of student activists from across the country to build collective power and share strategies of mobilization, grow knowledge about critical domestic and global feminist issues, and learn grassroots organizing tactics. On Monday, March 25th, students will take their knowledge, power, and voices to Capitol Hill for a Congressional Advocacy Day! Join us as we discuss issues including:

<p>Reproductive health, rights, and justice</p> <p>Abortion clinic defense</p> <p>LGBTQIA+ rights</p>	<p>Voter mobilization</p> <p>Organizing methods and tactics</p> <p>Equal Rights Amendment</p>	<p>Global feminism</p> <p>Stopping gender apartheid</p> <p>Racial Justice</p>
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Early Bird Registration is now open!

Scan the QR Code or go to bit.ly/NYFLC2024 to register!



Go to feministcampus.org/conference for more details and email Madelyn Amos at mamos@feminist.org with any questions.

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To join or renew membership in the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues go to :

[CWI Membership form-pdf fillable](https://womensclearinghouse.org/membership/) also on CWI website at

<https://womensclearinghouse.org/membership/>



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Celebrating 50th Anniversaries of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues, Ms. Magazine and Other Feminist Organizations

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Zoom Meeting Registration Link (12:30-1:30 pm)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZcscuusqTMuHNEp2K7Sy4bVHIYHW7T8k7IS>

Confirm attendance by 3-24 for limited In-Person Meeting. (Noon-1:30 pm) Alliance for Justice, 11 Dupont Circle NW, #500, Washington, DC. with this link: https://womensclearinghouse.org/event/march2024-celebrating_50th_anniversaries_of_cwi_msmagazine_and_other_feminist_organizations/

For Women's History Month of 2024, the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (CWI) is delighted to celebrate its own history and that of other feminist organizations also celebrating 50 year anniversaries. The first 30 minutes of the informal in person March 26 CWI meeting will be at our pre Covid meeting location, The Alliance for Justice, (address above) for attendees to enjoy a light lunch. It will be followed by our hybrid (in person and virtual) meeting at 12:30 pm for our many friends across the country.

During the hybrid meeting (starting at 12:30 pm on zoom link above), we will hear from our long time Vice President, **Anne Martin** about CWI's first 30 years described in [Women Networking: Three Decades of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues \(pdf\)](#) as well as more in-depth highlights of our meetings during the most recent 20 years. CWI works as an educator and catalyst for feminist action in areas ranging from the arts to fighting sex discrimination and promoting women's empowerment in all areas of our lives domestically and globally. In doing so our CWI meetings feature the expertise of other feminist and progressive organizations. The meetings provide opportunities for all participants to gain knowledge and insight which will not only further our democratic feminist goals but allow us to honor and work with each other in achieving these goals.

Next we will hear from **Eleanor Smeal** and **Katherine Spillar** about [50 Years of Ms.](#) Eleanor Smeal is publisher of [Ms. Magazine](#) and President of the Feminist Majority and the Feminist Majority Foundation. Katherine Spillar is the Executive Editor of Ms. and Executive Director of the Feminist Majority Foundation. They will discuss how feminist organizations and Ms. Magazine have advanced and documented progress for gender equality as well as many attacks on our goals such as we are enduring now with the oral arguments (3-26-24) at the Supreme Court to defend the widespread availability of Mifepristone for non-surgical abortions and other reproductive health care.

We have also noted that there are other 50 year celebrations. For example, March 8, 2024 was the 50th anniversary of [International Women's Day](#). The [Women's Sports Foundation](#) founded by Billie Jean King is celebrating its 50th anniversary as is [MANA, a National Latina Organization](#), [the Society for the Psychology of Women \(Division 35 of the American Psychological Association\)](#), the [Equal Rights Advocates](#), and [the Women's Department in the American Federation of Government Employees](#). Let us know what other Feminist organizations are celebrating 50th anniversaries and we will report this in our April CWI newsletter.

Next CWI meeting April 23, 2024. Why Feminists Should Fear Christian Nationalism?

Summary Feb. 27, 2024 CWI Meeting: Rethinking Women’s Political Power: Recognizing and Overcoming Challenges to Incumbents, Candidates, Voters and Election Officers

[Video of Meeting: Feb 2024-Rethinking Women’s Political Power: Recognizing and Overcoming Challenges to Incumbents, Candidates, Voters and Election Officers](#) with [Dr. Kelly Dittmar](#) and [Dr. Maya Kornberg](#). This meeting was moderated by [Jan Erickson](#), Government Relations Director, National Organization for Women, NOW and Co-President CWI and [Connie Cordovilla](#), Fairfax County Election Officer and Vice President CWI.



Maya Kornberg, of the Brennan Center for Justice shared a recent report's findings about local and State officeholders' exposure to in person and online abuse towards them because of holding these positions. The results show that the majority of state and local officials surveyed face hostility, with women and people of color reporting higher levels of violence than their white male colleagues. Nearly half those women surveyed/interviewed for the report said they would not re-run for office for fear of further abuse towards them or their families. Similarly, nearly half stated they tend to stay away from some policy issues due to similar threats. This increased violence towards politicians includes Republicans, some of whom believe the threats come from extremists in their party. The number one report recommendation to help officeholders feel safer is to have them speak up against abuse to each other.



Dr. Kelly Dittmar, of Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, spoke of a Dec 2023 report she authored that explores gender disparities in women's political power. Kelly authored the recently released report “Rethinking Women’s Political Power.” The Report <https://rethinkingpower.rutgers.edu/> examines at the state and local level (1) women’s navigation of the political ecosystem; (2) perceptions about women’s political power and progress, (3) an assessment of the support infrastructure for women in politics in the state (including its service of women across party and racial/ethnic lines); (4) views on the strength and influence of political parties in the state; (5) perceptions on where and with whom political power lies in the state; and (6) insights into opportunities for increasing women’s political power. The report was based on 192 interviews across 5 states with current and former officials and other political adjacent people. A link to the microsite interactively illustrates the report, with many written quotes from interviewees, and some audio: <https://rethinkingpower.rutgers.edu/>

- [PDF version of Kornberg’s presentation](#)
- [PDF version of Dittmar’s presentation](#)

Resources From the Presenters on Fighting the Intimidation of Voters and Election Officers:

1. Brennan Center Reports on Intimidation of Office Holders, Election Workers and Voters
Intimidation of Voters and Election Workers Resource Guide- <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voter-intimidation-and-election-worker-intimidation-resource-guide>
2. Another Barrier to Latino Representation: Intimidation of Election Officials—
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/another-barrier-latino-representation-intimidation-election-officials>
3. Intimidation of State and Local Officeholders <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/intimidation-state-and-local-officeholders>
4. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Know Your Rights: Voter Intimidation https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_pdf_file/kyr-voterintimidation-v03.pdf

5. Georgetown Law School, Fact Sheet: Protecting Against Voter Intimidation <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/icap/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/10/Voter-Intimidation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
6. Advancement Project, What to Do if You Experience Intimidation at the Polls <https://advancementproject.org/what-to-do-if-you-experience-intimidation-at-the-polls/>
7. United States Election Assistance Commission, Security Resources for Election Officials <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/election-official-security>
8. Brookings Institution, One Way to Protect Female Election Officials from Harassment <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/one-way-to-protect-female-election-officials-from-harassment/>

Director Named for Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum.

CWI has had several meetings on the Women’s museums in the DC Area. The Congressionally approved Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum’s new Director is Elizabeth C. Babcock and she is to start June 3, 2024 but a site has not yet been selected. Babcock has over 20 years of museum leadership experience and is a cultural anthropologist and educator.

The 2024 Induction Ceremony for the National Women’s Hall of Fame is [now available for viewing on YouTube!](#) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky-5nt-4qxc&t=1s>) Two of the March 5, 2024 inductees, Peggy McIntosh and Kimberle Crenshaw, have been featured at CWI meetings. We think you will enjoy and be inspired by this well done ceremony celebrating 10 inductees.

Invitation to Major Feminist Conference in DC area March 23-25, 2024

The Feminist Majority Foundation's National Young Feminist Leadership Conference is returning to DC after 4 years! The 2024 NYFLC brings together student activists to build collective power and share strategies of resistance, grow knowledge about critical domestic and global feminist issues, learn hands-on grassroots organizing tactics, and mobilize for political gain. NYFLC is a chance to recognize that we are a part of something big, a community of activists working for justice all around the country. It's the perfect place to learn about current political issues, hear from inspirational leaders, and meet fellow feminist students! Find more information and register at <https://feministcampus.org/conference/> Please encourage high school and college feminists to attend but all feminists are welcome!

Arts and Culture Opportunities

Smithsonian American Art Museum presents *Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas* (to June 2, 2024)

The Baltimore Museum of Art exhibit *Work: Women Printmakers of the WPA*, (to June 30, 2024).

CWI’s newsletter is endowed in loving memory of our previous longtime editor, Roslyn Kaiser

Newsletter edited by Sue Klein

CWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JULY 2023– JUNE 2025

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To join or renew membership in the Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues go to :

[CWI Membership form-pdf fillable](#) also on CWI website at <https://womensclearinghouse.org/membership/>



May 2024 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (CWI)
Newsletter and Meeting Invitation
<https://womensclearinghouse.org>

Celebrating Sex Ed for All Month: Getting the Facts of Life

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

Zoom Meeting Registration Link (12:00-1:00 pm)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZcscuusqTMuHNep2K7Sy4bVHIYHW7T8k7IS>

May is dedicated as Sex Ed for All Month, so we plan to focus on this important topic. This month is designated as an opportunity to voice shared commitment to a world where all young people get equitable access to the education and care they deserve. Looking at the process in terms of what should be taught, what are the challenges that arise when dealing with intimate topics and how to press on to be sure that sex education is reaching all youth who need and deserve “the facts of life”. This topic will be covered by two leading youth education organizations.

We continue to be concerned that comprehensive, fact-based sex education taught in public schools has long been opposed by certain elements – many in conservative states. Because sex education laws and policies are made by state and local leaders, sex education is frequently under attack. Politicians in many states have deployed various efforts to limit access to sex education, promote conservative agendas, and keep sex educators out of schools. Their efforts have meant that no comprehensive sex education programs are provided in those communities and instead students are exposed to non-factual, abstinence-only information. This opposition continues in many parts of the country, but notable progress is being made. See your state's sex education Profile, [State Profiles - SIECUS](#) .

SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change (SIECUS), an organization that worked with partners to reframe May as Sex Ed for All month, monitors whether states provide comprehensive, fact-based education. The organization envisions an equitable nation where all people receive sex education, are affirmed in their identities, and have power to make decisions about their own health, pleasure, and wholeness. They work to enhance educator, advocate, parent, youth, clinician, partner, and public understanding of the current state of sexuality education in the United States and opportunities for improvement in both policy and practice. We will have the President of SIECUS, **Christine Soyong Harley** (she/her/hers) speak about progress and the need for further improvements in sex education across the nation.

Since 2019, Christine Soyong Harley has led SIECUS to focus on sex education as a vehicle for social change, focusing on the broad benefits of comprehensive sex education to prevent child abuse and sexual violence, and to advance education on consent, gender justice, and affirmation of LGBTQ communities. Chris brings extensive executive leadership experience to SIECUS, including having previously run her own consulting business and was the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders under the Obama Administration. Christine also brings experience working in state-level agencies and community organizing to SIECUS.

Advocates for Youth (AFY) also works to make sure that sex education is factual and non-discriminating. Founded in 1980, Advocates for Youth envisions a society in which all young people are valued, respected and treated with dignity; sexuality is accepted as a healthy part of being human; and youth sexual development is normalized and embraced. Advocates for Youth champions efforts to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. AFY believes it can best serve the field by boldly advocating a more positive and realistic approach to adolescent sexual health. We are fortunate that **Nora Gelperin, AFY's Director, Sexuality Education and Training** will continue the discussion of who, what and how

sexuality education can best be carried out and the obstacles that these educators must face in delivering comprehensive sensitive and factual information.

Nora has more than twenty years of experience providing sexuality education to youth and professional development to education professionals. Prior to joining AFY, she was the Director of Training at Answer where she founded the Training Institute in Sexual Health Education (TISHE) and Answer's online professional development workshops. She was a community educator with Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey. Nora holds a Masters in School Health Education from Temple University, was awarded a Mary Lee Tatum Award from Planned Parenthood Leaders in Education, and was named a 2014 Fellow of the American School Health Association.

In addition to their 20–25-minute presentations, our speakers will participate in a Q and A session.

The June 25, 2024 virtual CWI noon meeting will be on “Defending the April 2024 Title IX Regulations”.

Summary of April 23, 2024 CWI meeting on “Why Feminists Should Fight Christian Nationalism”

For complete information on this important video presentation by Andrew Seidel and Katherine Stewart go to YouTube <https://youtu.be/bx1Se-ijEc>. **Andrew L. Seidel** is an attorney and Vice President of Strategic Communications, Americans United for Separation of Church and State. He is the author of two books: *The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism Is Un-American* (2019) and *American Crusade: How the Supreme Court is Weaponizing Religious Freedom* (2022) and many articles. **Katherine Stewart's** latest book, *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*, was awarded first place for Excellence in Nonfiction Books by the Religion News Association as well as a Morris D. Forkosch award. She writes for *The New York Times* opinion, *New Republic* and others, and has appeared: on CNN, MSNBC, and NPR. The documentary *God & Country*, produced by Rob Reiner and Michele Reiner, is based on her book. This video recording of the 4-23-24 CWI meeting is also available on CWI's website: womensclearinghouse.org

Sue Klein, Co-President of CWI explained the process for the meeting such as that Katherine and Andrew are going to take turns being the first respondent to the four questions in the meeting invitation.

- 1. Define Christian Nationalism and help us understand its history and how it relates to other forms of Christianity such as Evangelicalism and fundamentalism and how it differs from other religious adherence to Christianity or other religions that don't advocate religious nationalism.**



Katherine Stewart said Christian Nationalism (CN) is basically the idea that America was founded as a Christian Nation and our laws should be based on a reactionary reading of the Bible. This involves a mythologized reading of American history and distortions of constitutional law. It carries with it other elements, such as the idea that the country is under threat by liberals and secularists. We're on the edge of an apocalypse, and radical actions are justified in order to “save” the country. The rank and file of the Christian Nationalist movement have also been led to believe that conservative Christians are the most persecuted group in America. Many of them are inclined to give their support to an authoritarian strongman who promises to defeat the enemy by any means necessary. So

Christian Nationalism involves a mindset that can be easily exploited.

It is important to be clear that Christian Nationalism isn't a religion. It's about politics and power. The movement consists of a dense organizational ecosystem made of various groups that we can group into categories. There are right-wing think tanks, policy groups, networking organizations that get movement funders and members of the leadership on the same page, a vast messaging and propaganda-sphere, and data organizations. A vast legal ecosystem grows and promotes far-

right justices and pushes cases intended to destroy separation of church and state, which Andrew is going to talk about later.

This is a leadership-driven movement, and the leadership sets the agenda, not the rank and file. A cadre of donors funnel huge amounts of money into the movement's organizational infrastructure. Critical to this infrastructure are the networks that draw in tens of thousands of pastors, who are given sophisticated messaging and even data tools and who then turn out their congregations to vote for the hard-right candidates that the movement favors.

Christian Nationalism in its present form can be traced to a movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s called the New Right, which was led by conservatives like Paul Weyrich and Phyllis Schlafly. They felt the Republican Party had become too liberal, too soft on communism. They were also concerned that the IRS was threatening to revoke the tax privileged status of segregated private schools. They saw in the abortion issue, the potential to unite their movement, and they purged prochoice voices from the Republican party. They recognized that if you can get people to vote on a single issue, you can essentially control their vote.

Andrew Seidel added people need to understand that Christian Nationalism is an existential threat to our democracy. They believe that the U.S. is a Christian nation based on Christian principles and that we've strayed from our Godly roots. They use the language of return—of getting back to the way America was and making America great again—to justify exclusionary public policies and even insurrections.

- 2. Discuss the importance of the separation of church and state in acting as a bulwark against Christian Nationalism. In contrast, note that secular nationalism/patriotism is a key reason to make sure the secular Equal Rights Amendment is in the U.S. Constitution to counter legislation such as a Christian national ban on abortions.**

Andrew Seidel said the wall of separation between church and state is an “American original” that was first implemented



in the American experiment. Until then no other nation in the history of humanity had sought to protect the ability of its citizens to think freely by separating religion and government. We should be proud of this. We shouldn't let people undermine it. If you look at our Constitution many of the truly unique and original elements of the Constitution are secular. Our Constitution was the first to declare that power comes from people not gods. Our Constitution was the first not mention a god at all. It was godless by choice, which upset some in the founding generation. Our Constitution was the first to ban religious tests for public office in Article 6. Then after all of that, you have the First Amendment which separates church and state and guarantees religious freedom. Andrew noted that there is

lot that is wrong with our Constitution, but those secular foundations are what made it unique, and they are genuine contributions. The separation of church and state is a cure for white Christian Nationalism, that's why it's also the first target. The wall of separation between church and state is not a wall that divides us. It's a wall that protects us. It's a wall that allows us to flourish. It protects full funding for public schools instead of vouchers for private religious schools, accurate science about evolution and sex education, full civil and political rights for LGBTQI individuals, and for reproductive justice and choice to be fully realized. End Christian Nationalism and separate church and state and you're going to see progress. Recently Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and the National Women's Law Center challenged Missouri's abortion bans as a violation of church state separation.

- 3. Describe the many ways that CN hurts women and feminists including reproductive rights, public education, and many other aspects of equality.**

Katherine Stewart said the founders were clear on the question of taxation. They agreed, along with the Baptists, that taxing the people to fund churches was a form of tyranny. There has absolutely been backward movement in this regard. In addition to receiving tax exemptions and subsidies, religious organizations are receiving direct funding from taxpayers in a number of ways, including vouchers for religious schools that are free to discriminate and teach contempt for people of other faiths. Crisis pregnancy centers now take in nearly \$100 million or more every single year in direct taxpayer

funding. They claim to offer medical care but instead they often evangelize women, seek to control their reproductive behavior, and provide incredibly misleading health information.

Authoritarian movements often come to power by exploiting gender inequality and gender anxieties. They remain in power, in part, by imposing those hierarchies; the attack on women's rights is an intrinsic part of the attack on Democracy. Depriving women of reproductive rights, including birth control medication that they choose to characterize as abortion, isn't just a consequence of anti-abortion politics. After all, they're not going after men who impregnate women against their will (most women who seek abortions did not want the man to impregnate them), or outlawing prescriptions of Viagra for unmarried men, which could also be used for "sin." Abortion bans deny us the most fundamental conditions for our physical and psychological integrity, the options we need to ensure best-practices maternal care, the ability to decide our relationships and our futures.

Many supporters of abortion rights frame the anti-abortion movement in narrow terms. We think it's just an issue of fetal development or think that the only people whose rights are at stake are women who are seeking to terminate their pregnancy. But abortion has never just been an isolated policy preference among some people with certain religious convictions. It is really one piece of a radical movement working toward a transformation and indeed destruction of our democracy. You can't take away the rights of those who are seeking abortions without taking away the rights of all women, whether they're seeking abortion or not. Because you are identifying one gender as a subordinate class, whose most fundamental and private choices may be controlled by the state.

Katherine Stewart also discussed the CN movement's public school agenda. It is twofold: on the one hand, they wish to force their programming into public schools. On the other, they wish to diminish faith in public education in order to soften the ground for privatization, and even wholesale public funding of religious schools. There are enormous sums of money involved in public education, and movement activists know that if they can capture a portion of that, the money will flow without end, enriching "right-thinking" people and bolstering religious organizations some of which are otherwise losing membership and struggling financially. The movement denounces public schools by saying they are "woke," but they make no bones about the fact that their goal is to indoctrinate children in their preferred ideologies. There's nothing conservative about this agenda. It is radical, and gutting public education is at the heart of it.

Andrew Seidel added information about the Supreme Court Arguments on 4-24-24 about EMTALA, the Federal law which should allow doctors to provide abortions when the health/life of the pregnant women is threatened instead of following state law which doesn't allow abortions. He also reminded us of June 1st, 2020, when Trump had peaceful protesters gassed and beaten and brutalized with rubber bullets so that he could walk to a church to pose for a photo with a Bible. He was trying to show that this nation was a Christian Nation and that anyone who disagrees should be beaten. The goal of Christian Nationalism is to rewrite or redefine the Constitution so that it creates two classes of people, the "right" kind of Conservative Christian and everyone else. Christian Nationalists in this country will not stop until we stop them. They are coming for contraception. They are coming for a wide abortion ban. They're coming for marriage equality. They want an unfettered right to discriminate. They are openly talking about repealing the 19th Amendment as Katherine mentioned, like they want to be a special favored class and everyone else to be second class citizens. Christian Nationalists in this country will not stop until we stop them. They're coming for marriage equality. They want an unfettered right to discriminate.

4. Describe the scope and ways people are influenced to support Christian Nationalism and how it relates to partisan politics and the upcoming U.S. elections.

Andrew Seidel started by saying that he is not speaking for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a 501c3 organization that does not endorse candidates. He said my great fear for this election and the way that Christian Nationalism is going to influence this election is political violence. The popular vote margin in the last election was 7 million votes but the election was decided by 40,000 votes in three states. That's like half a Taylor Swift concert. So, every single vote matters and that gives the violence that is inherent in white Christian Nationalist movement an outsize impact and if you remember back to the midterms, we did see some dry runs for voter intimidation. We saw armed militia at the polls

in Arizona. We've since seen Christian Nationalist leaders calling on the mob to head into cities in swing states and to "police the polls," so I am deeply worried about the prospect for political violence this cycle and that was what January 6th was all about. Katherine and I both contributed to a report [Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021, Insurrection](#) that explored the role of Christian Nationalism in the January 6th Insurrection. It was produced by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and the Freedom from Religion Foundation (2-9-2022). The goal of the violence of January 6th, at least from the inner circle, was not actually to stop the count or to necessarily overthrow the government. It was to create enough chaos to throw the election to the House of Representatives where each state delegation--each state--gets one vote for president. That was the real goal. In that scenario, in 2020 and likely in 2024, Trump comes out as president no matter what the popular vote says, no matter what the Electoral College says. If there's enough chaos, the vote goes to the House of Representatives. That is the big way that this election could be influenced by Christian Nationalists so let me temper that with a little bit of good news.

There were quite a few Christian Nationalists that lost early on. They lost in the primaries and that turned out to be a signal of things to come. Idaho lieutenant governor Janice McGeachin tried to primary her governor and lost. You may remember her ad where she was posing with a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other. She hosted mask burnings and said that "God calls us to pick up the sword and fight and Christ will reign in the state of Idaho," if she is elected. She lost. Arkansas state senator Jason Rapert ran for lieutenant governor and was the driving force behind the Ten Commandments monument at the Arkansas Capital. He also created the National Association of Christian lawmakers, which pushes Christian Nationalist bills in all 50 states. He lost, but unfortunately Sarah Sanders put him on the library board so he's wreaking havoc there. There were many other CN's at the Jan. 6 rally, and most who ran for election, lost.

Christian Nationalists are not just wrong about what America is and how it was founded. Their beliefs and identity run counter to the ideals on which this nation was founded. They really are unamerican. And they're also unpopular. I think this goes to the question here, the politics of Christian Nationalism. Their beliefs are wildly unpopular. They oppose marriage equality - 71% of Americans support it. They want to outlaw abortion and 85% of Americans think it should be LEGAL in some way shape or form. They want a nation of Christians like them and 73% of Americans are more welcoming of religious pluralism. They almost certainly want to ban contraception too, but something like 91% of Americans are in favor. And those numbers verify that they are scared because the non-religious Americans are on the rise and because Americans are leaving religion behind and because we elected our first black president and black female vice president. Because every day we are closer to racial and gender and LGBTQI equality. So conservative white Christian American status as the dominant group is threatened. They're losing the culture wars which I think is a silly phrase meant to mask attacks on human rights. They're losing the power and the privilege and the deference which they believe they are due, and we know that when a dominant group in a society FEELS its status threatened that it reacts or overreacts by trying to retain that status to holding on to that power and privilege. That's why they're turning to Christian Nationalism. That's why they turn to the violent Insurrection that we saw on January 6.

How can we better defend the Equal Rights Amendment in contrast to Christian Nationalism? The ERA is a national policy, not a religion. Andrew often associates Nationalism with a jingoistic fervent belief that one's country can do no wrong, that whatever it does is right. It's blind unthinking loyalty. Patriotism is different. It is best summed up by James Baldwin who said, "I love America more than any other country in the world and exactly for this reason I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually." Patriots believe in an America where the separation of church and state is an absolute. They are the true heroes of the American experiment, the true Patriots, not the Christian Nationalists. So those two things are very distinct. I think you must separate nationalism from National policy and certainly Christian Nationalism is against our national/Constitutional policy of the separation of church and state.

Katherine added information about authoritarian political leaders outside the U.S. They often bind themselves tightly to ultraconservative religious leaders in their own countries in order to consolidate corrupt and dictatorial forms of political power, and to guard against any abuses they may be perpetrating against their own people. She shows how the movement is intensely focused on voter turnout, because in a country where 40 to 50 per cent of people don't bother to vote, they recognize that they don't need a majority to win elections, all they need is a disproportionately mobilized

minority. They strategically focus on the counties they need, often on swing districts in swing states. She points out that it is important to vote not just for the top of the ticket but also down ballot, and to engage in politics at the local level.

Q 1. Are there any rays of hope? **Andrew** responded, yes. I have been fighting CN for 15 years and there is a ground swell of opposition happening that I've never seen before. CNs are going to rage against the dying of their privilege but in the end, we are going to win because they fight only for themselves. Where they are selfish, we are selfless. They want supremacy, we want equality. We are the majority.

Q2. How to have hard conversations with CN's or others you want to persuade? Temper your expectations. You are never going to change somebody's mind in one conversation. Your goal should be to plant seeds of doubt and seeds of cognitive dissonance that will allow them to change their own minds in their own time.

CWI co-President, Jan Erickson ended handling questions by urging all to see the two documentaries on CN: *They are God and Country* and *Bad Faith: CN's Unholy War on Democracy*.

Preparing for CWI Elections: Call for Volunteers

CWI elections for board members and officers will be held at the CWI June 25, 2024 meeting. We are looking for candidates for 2 year terms for Treasurer, Secretary, and Board members to assume Board/Vice President positions in their areas of expertise. Please Contact Co-President Sue Klein if you want to join the CWI Board/Officers. susikdc@gmail.com or home tel. 202-488-7430 or Co-President Jan Erickson ericksonjan7@gmail.com , mobile 240-481-5579.

CWI's newsletter is endowed in loving memory of our previous longtime editor, Roslyn Kaiser

Newsletter edited by Sue Klein

CWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JULY 2023– JUNE 2025

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June 2024 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (CWI)
Newsletter and Meeting Invitation
<https://womensclearinghouse.org>

Changes and Challenges in the 2024 Title IX Regulations

Tuesday, June 25, 2024 (12:00 noon-1:30 pm ET)

[Zoom Meeting Registration Link](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91281024479)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcscuusqTMuHNEp2K7Sy4bVHIYHW7T8k7IS>

June is Pride Month, but the long-awaited Title IX Regulations from the US Department of Education are being attacked primarily because they have clarified anti-sex discrimination provisions relating to LBGTQI+ students, but also because they restore protections against sex-based harassment in schools and clarify accommodations that schools need to provide for students who terminate their pregnancies. As we celebrate the 52nd anniversary of Title IX, our experts will help us understand the key changes in the 2024 Title IX Regulations and make sure that they are implemented as planned despite the political and legal challenges.

Jeanette Lim Esbrook, a former Acting Assistant Secretary for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and CWI's Vice President for Legal Affairs, will serve as Moderator. She will give a brief history of Title IX Regulations and how they are implemented. Then she will discuss how the April 2024 Title IX Regulations or Rules, which are to be implemented Aug. 1, 2024, improve safeguards for recipients of sexual assault/harassment to correct problems in the current 2020 Trump Administration Rules.

Rebecca Amadi, Federal Policy Manager, GLSEN, which works to ensure that LBGTQI+ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment, will describe the justifications for and objections against the non-discrimination provisions relating to gender identity and sexual orientation in the 2024 Title IX Rules. She will discuss why they were included in the Rules (including the Supreme Court Bostock decision), what they cover, and why the promised Title IX Athletic Rules have not been released. Then she will describe LBGTQI+ supporters' actions to implement the new Title IX Regulations.

Shiwali Patel, Director of Safe and Inclusive Schools & Senior Counsel, National Women's Law Center, a lawyer who formerly worked in the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, will describe House Joint Resolution 165 and its companion in the Senate which would undo the new Title IX Rules as well as the litigation by 26 states and others against the April 2024 Title IX Regulations. She will outline likely scenarios for the timing and implementation of the Title IX Rules and suggest what supporters of these Rules should be doing.

Karen Truskowski, representing Stop Sexual Assault in Schools (SSAIS) is an SSAIS Officer and attorney who represents K-12 and higher education Title IX plaintiffs. She will discuss how the Title IX 2020 Regulations were changed in 2024 relating to the procedures to be used in handling complaints of sexual assault and harassment and to provide more explicit protections and support to pregnant and parenting students. She will also discuss the specified roles of Title IX Coordinators and their designees such as investigators, decision makers, appeals officers and informal resolution facilitators and how they are supposed to work with all involved.

After the presentations the experts will have a chance to question and comment on their colleagues' statements and the zoom participants will have an opportunity to ask questions.

The next CWI Zoom meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2024.

Summary of May 28, 2024 CWI Meeting on Celebrating Sex Ed for All Month: Getting the Facts of Life

Thanks to Sophia Rubbo, National Organization for Women Government Relations Intern for transcribing the video and to Jan Erickson, and Sue Klein for additional edits.

The video recording link to this meeting is available here: <https://youtu.be/QySJrAXqFhw>

Jan Erickson, CWI Co-President was moderator. She started by saying, "I think this is a topic that everybody should appreciate and learn about the challenges nationally and in many states. Please check the meeting invitation to learn about the very impressive qualifications of our presenters: Christine Soyong Harley, the President and CEO of SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change (<https://siecus.org>) and Nora Gelperin, the Director of Sexuality Education and Training, Advocates for Youth (<https://AdvocatesforYouth.org>.)

SIECUS advocates for transformative public policies to build cross-movement coalitions and to foster a national dialogue ensuring that sex education drives social change. **Chris Harley** has led SIECUS since 2019 with a focus on education as a vehicle for social change, focusing on the broad benefit of comprehensive sex education to prevent child abuse and sexual violence and to advance education on consent, gender justice, and affirmation of LGBTQ communities.



Chris said: One of the things that struck me about the Dobbs decision is that it really goes beyond abortion. What we saw was the Court undermined the right to privacy. This is one of the rights, that is not explicitly written but it's interpreted through the Supreme Court's knowledge of law. These laws have been primarily granted through the Ninth Amendment. The Dobbs decision just took the feet out from under them including the right to travel, presumption of innocence, the right to private sexual activity, the right to same-sex marriage, the right to interracial marriage, which is all the rights to one's own bodily reproductive and sexual autonomy.

And what you saw is that in some of the opinions that came through Dobbs, particularly from Clarence Thomas. He really indicated which of these rights should be ended and he named the right to privacy, the right to private sexual activity, the right to same-sex marriage, and then stopped at the right to interracial marriage, which you know personally would impact him. What is also fascinating about this decision, and this undermining of their right to privacy, is the way that the court justified this. Because what they argued was that not only is abortion not referenced anywhere in the Constitution, but they also argue the due process clause only guarantees rights that are deeply rooted in the nation's history and tradition and implicit in the concept of ordered Liberty. Which essentially was tracing this right, the concept of what is a right, back to the Magna Carta, which is a royal Charter of Rights that was adopted by King John of England in 1215. And I just have to keep going back to this place, because when we talk about why are we, at this moment having conversations about abortion and access to contraception and in all of these kinds of attacks that have erupted since the Dobbs decision, I have to really go back to the fact that they're justifying our human rights on a charter from 1215, when the only people who had rights in the world were white men with property. So, women, people of color, folks who did not own property themselves were basically cattle.

The other thing that I want to note about this period is the idea of reproductive racism. This was a concept introduced by Sophia Siddiqui writing in 2020, prior to the Dobbs decision about the rise of fascist far-right movements in Europe. She wrote about what is also happening in the United States. This idea of reproductive racism is a vision of the world and of the nation where white, Native women's bodies are seen as a resource for national development and there is a simultaneous attempt to stop the reproduction of those who are deemed unworthy. There is this strong vision of a heteronormative nation that's propelled by these far-right movements and so anyone who is a minority, who is non-white, who doesn't conform to these heteronormative ideas of sex and gender, become threats, right? So, then these conversations about LGBTQ and transgender youth and access to health care all become a part of this conversation. And so this is really the theological grounding and precipice that we're in right now, where this fight over what is the future of the United States is coming from.

And sex education starts to sit right at the heart of that when we're having conversations about how young people understand their own bodily autonomy and how to navigate this very diverse world. So this is why we talk about sex

education as a vehicle for social change. Our theory of change is that quality inclusive sex education that is shame free, developmentally appropriate, and inserts a positive Sexual Health as a human right, helps young people, helps all of us understand how to build a world where bodily autonomy is understood as inalienable, but also where the diversity of human experience can be affirmed. And where we all can sit in a world where our reproduction, our choices about who we are with and how we navigate the world sexually are honored and valued.

How do we form a world where they are seen and affirmed for who they are? And what we know is that after 30 years of research, sex education is profoundly impactful in terms of how it supports young people in navigating the world with a much greater level of respect and affirmation for people who are both like them and unlike them. Professors Eva Goldfarb and Lisa Lieberman released a 30-year literature review in 2020 which showed that when sex education conforms to the national sex ed standards, which Nora will talk about later, the main takeaways are it increases appreciation of sexual diversity, it acts as a preventative tool for interpersonal violence prevention, as well as child sexual abuse prevention, by giving young people access to tools and resources and strategies for navigating these things. It helps promote healthy relationships because people learn how to navigate consent and rejection and discuss sexual preferences with each other. It also improves social-emotional learning in media literacy especially when we're talking about porn because it helps young people understand the world that they're navigating and to be able to do so with a lot more integrity than when they're just thrown into it because they don't have access to information and they're trying to find answers to questions that aren't being answered in school.

Suddenly, in the aftermath of the Dobbs decision we see sex education coming under extreme attack, and not just sex education but school programs that are promoting inclusion and affirmation for the diversity of young people today. We know that America is becoming increasingly diverse, and part of that demographic transition requires us to create communities where people are being valued. Unfortunately, what we see is little sex education where these conversations are occurring. So, I wanted to show just how dramatic this shift has been. In 2022 suddenly, the landscape for sex education went from one in where we were having a lot of positive conversations. We were introducing bipartisan legislation around consent, we were seeing states pass statewide mandates and bills, advancing comprehensive sex education programs, and the Healthy Youth Act, a bill that we promote. We saw sex ed moving in the right direction. And then suddenly in 2022, there was this flurry of hate-based bills that were being filed that attacked vulnerable students, public school curriculum, and then libraries related to sex education, school LGBTQIA rights, transgender rights, and racial justice. There was actually a 438 percent increase in these sorts of divisive concept curriculum bills that were effectively trying to censor what was being taught in schools. That increase from 2021 to 2022 was quite overwhelming. There were over 140 so-called parental rights bills that were introduced. This effort by conservatives told parents, your students are being taught inappropriate content and we have to give you these tools to litigate and attack and to censor what is being taught in the schools. Anti-LGBTQ bills and racial equity bills were some of the biggest pieces of legislation that we started to see in 2022. Sex education was about 12% of the attacks which were primarily attacking the right for young people to be taught anything about their sexual health. Now moving to 2023, you see that this shift increased last year, so suddenly now we're at nearly 70% of the bills we are opposing because of the strong attack on LGBTQ and youth sex education. In 2022, there was a 438 percent increase. In 2023 that increased an additional 27% from the year before.

This slide shows the range of policies that we have been contending with for the last couple of years. We're talking about censorship and bans on what teachers can do, how teachers can talk about racism and US history, on schools, bans on lessons that teach kids empathy. How to work with each other, how to manage stress and anxiety in school, these social emotional learning goals that have been shown to be profoundly impactful in helping young people navigate their mental health. We saw bans on and censorship of conversations around sexual orientation, so-called don't say gay bills, bans on transgender girls participating in school sports or using the bathroom of their identity. There were efforts to take money from public schools and give it to religious schools that are teaching more Judeo-Christian style lessons, bans on preventing parents, from supporting their transgender young people in terms of health care or access to services, this uptick in parental notification kind of kills this right to privacy and this understanding of bodily autonomy as controlled by the individual.

I want you to understand that the national landscape for sex education has always been precarious. There is no national federal mandate on sex education, there's no state, there aren't even state mandates for the most part on sex education. What you see are state by state, folks making decisions about what is being taught, and it's so loose because

sex education comes through the education kind of policy world where it's almost state by state, school by school in terms of what is being taught. Often when you see States pass a mandate that says here are the requirements that you must teach for sex education, the question is for principals or superintendents who decide to teach sex education, here are the requirements or standards that you need to follow. If you don't decide to teach sex education. Only 29 States and DC mandate sex education, and then again, they're making choices. Are we requiring an abstinence-only approach including telling young people that they are immoral if they have sex outside of a heteronormative marriage? Or are we teaching sex education that is age appropriate, medically accurate, culturally responsive, and evidence-based?

Then the line is where even in the places where sex education or HIV education might be provided is it coming through an abstinence-only lens whose goal is to coerce young people to abstain from sex by lying to them about the risks and facts around sexual health and sexual activity. This is what I'm talking about in terms of the federal sex ed with no federal mandates. We've been wasting millions and millions of dollars over the last 15-20 years on abstinence-only, until marriage programs, which we now call sexual risk avoidance. And adolescent sexual health programs overall tend to be underfunded. SIECUS advocates and our partners are all pushing for the passage of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act, which would be the first federal bill to actually fund comprehensive sex education programs, particularly for underfunded schools with the most vulnerable young people who need this information.



Nora Gelperin, Advocates for Youth, Director of Sexuality Education and Training said: Just imagine what a world would be like if quality sex education was taught universally and think about how young people might be navigating the world differently if they were all taught that they get to make the choices for their bodies and they got to learn healthy relationship skills like consent to navigate the world.

The national organizations that support sex education in schools include the major education and health associations, school counselors, public health, and pediatricians. Those that oppose are the usual suspects. They may pop up with particularly state-specific names like Utah Parents United, but it is just a front for Moms for Liberty, pretty much all funded by the Heritage Foundation and a couple of others. So don't be fooled, a lot of people think that it's just my community or it's just my state or my town, when really, it's a very well-funded, well-organized opposition to undermine the rights of public education and specifically sex education. And at the same time, we know that public support for sex education has not wavered over the past three decades. A survey of all 50 state associations of the Parent Teacher Association shows high support for sex education, even for issues that are more controversial such as sexual orientation and gender identity. This has been stable over the last three decades. We know we've got parents on our side; it just doesn't always seem that way when the power brokers or the folks making the decisions skew white, male, heterosexual, and cisgender. But let me take a step back and just talk about what do we mean when we say sex education. So as Chris alluded to there is a set of voluntary standards called the National Sexuality Education Standards. Chris and I were part of the team that wrote the most recent version that came out in 2020. This is really the minimum essential core content in skills across these topic areas and across kindergarten through 12th grade. It sets the floor for schools so they can look at what their state requirements are, what the curriculum is, and how do they measure up so they can look at areas where they can improve their instruction.

We often hear that sex education is taught by people with advanced degrees, just like math or social studies or science. Instead, sex education is often taught by a classroom teacher or school nurse, who has no background or training in sex education. Some of them are thrown into the classroom without having ever taken a class in health education or any content in sex education, just because they might be willing to do it. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of teacher training for the folks that are implementing sex education, particularly in lower elementary. But sex education that covers puberty is often just one to two class periods. A lot of times people think, well you know puberty is really complicated, everybody goes through it. So, it's really very sad that little is provided even around a topic that's as universal as puberty when we know students have so many questions. By fifth grade, we know we want our students to be thinking about how to show respect for themselves, to really understand that sexual orientation is around who you're attracted to, different ways that families come to be and how pregnancies get started. They are starting to understand that everyone has a gender and a gender identity, and we all express that in ways that are unique and authentic to us. Students also need to learn about personal safety and understand harassment, violence, and how to get help and from whom.

Does middle school sex education encourage students to delay having sex? Lots of studies show that by talking factually honestly and completely about sex education young people are more likely to postpone first intercourse, they're more likely to delay the onset of any sexual behavior, and more likely to have fewer sexual partners. We know that middle school sex education is really about social media, it's about healthy relationships, how to say no when you're not ready or comfortable doing something with another person, how to identify sources of information, and really, it's we're seeing a lot more interest in sex trafficking, as that becomes an issue that's of greater concern for many of our young people. And lastly, sex education in high school is usually only taught in ninth grade. It's really one freshman health class, of which maybe a week or two is sex education and the rest is stress and nutrition and alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. All-important topics, but we recognize that sex education is really nuanced and ever-changing. Just a couple of weeks ago the first over-the-counter birth control became available in all major pharmacies and drugstores. And kids have questions about those, and we need to give them complete and accurate answers. So, I wanted to just close by giving you just a few examples of some of the common attacks on sex education and some recommendations on how, if you were able to go to a school board meeting or to pen a letter to the editor or make a meeting with a school district in your area to just voice your support for sex education.

Here are some ways that you may be able to respond to some of these common attacks. The first one is that sex education is too explicit, we must protect the innocent. There's a lot of worry about talking about things that may be not age appropriate. There's so much more social media that's inundating young people with sexually inappropriate messages, that are confusing, that are contradictory, that aren't based in science. Sex education is there to provide the facts. We know in kindergarten through 12th grade everyone can use lessons on healthy relationships, on respect, self-esteem, consent and boundaries, and that we want to give young people a safe space to explore these issues, better understand them, think critically for themselves, understand their own cultural and faith values in consultation with trusted adults, parents, and caregivers and that sex education is a very necessary part of that equation. Another myth is that sex education is indoctrinating our young people with gender ideology and all these made-up words that they like to throw at us. It's not about education, we should focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic or whatever they say. I really want to say back that there's no young person who would know how to have a healthy relationship or be in a satisfying friendship or intimate relationship without the provision of sex education. They need to understand how their bodies work. I can't tell you how many college students I've taught that have no idea how many openings there are between a woman's legs. It's shocking that they got to college and have no information about that.

And lastly, that sex ed is grooming kids by talking about things that may be inappropriate or sexually too advanced when we know sex education studies show us that it actually prevents grooming. Associations like the American Academy of Pediatrics support it because we know by doing something as simple as just teaching young people the correct names for their body parts and not the cutesy little terms that maybe little kids are taught. By saying words like vulva, and scrotum, and anus, and penis, and nipples, is a protective factor from sexual abuse because then they know the correct names to talk about what happened to them. They know how to report if they should ever be touched inappropriately and so it's protective from sexual abuse and never anything close to grooming.

Some highlights, some ideas about how you might be able to respond if you should ever hear any of these claims are in this one-pager that we've got. SIECUS has some great messaging that we use all the time, we've developed some as well so use them all together to really stand up and support sex education. There are easy ways like sending an email, and more deep ways like going to a school board meeting with maybe just a sign that says I support sex education. You don't have to speak, you don't have to get up and testify, but there's lots of ways that we can all support sex education because we know our young people need and deserve it.

Sex Ed Resources and Toolkits for K-12 students:

*<https://futureofsexed.org>

*<https://amaze.org>

*<https://3rs.org>

*<https://siecus.org/action-center/>

*<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>

https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/truthaboutsexed_doublesided.pdf

[*https://futureofsexed.org](https://futureofsexed.org) [*https://amaze.org](https://amaze.org) [*https://3rs.org](https://3rs.org) [*https://siecus.org/action-center/](https://siecus.org/action-center/)
[*https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/](https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/) [*https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-...](https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-...)

Our free K-12 sex education curriculum is called Rights Respect Responsibility. It's 115 lessons long available in English and Spanish, LGBTQ inclusive and affirming. If you're curious what actually a lesson may look like at various grade levels or what do they teach about body image or respect feel free to go to the 3rs.org and you're welcome to download any of it. We also work on a big project called amaze.org where we've got over 200 short animated sexual health videos. We like to use these in ways when sex education isn't being provided in those schools or in those states.

Chris described the SIECUS Action Center. There's a couple of different entry points, but all those entry points are just opportunities to access either action alerts or toolkits, to help you get involved.

Questions and Answers:

Karen Humphrey in California with the National Women's Political Caucus noted that CA has a Healthy Youth Act but also a number of school boards where a lot of bad stuff is happening. She is concerned about handling social media and how early it needs to start and how we talk about the underlying gender dynamics that show up in social media. She saw a story about teenage boys in a high school taking the faces of girls from totally innocent pictures, like graduation pictures, and pasting them on to nude bodies and then sharing them around using AI. So where in sex education can you address this and how do you get kids to understand how ugly that is and what's the appropriate level of punishment if they figure out which boys did it?

Chris answered. I think one of the things that's important is, you know, recognizing that if you start talking about consent and bodily autonomy from when children are very young, they're growing up learning to both be respectful for themselves but also respect others. And that's you know one of the things that we talk about is scaffolding across the education lifespan, right from at least kindergarten, even before, but all the way through 12th grade. But I think that, you know, even thinking about in kindergarten or in first grade you know young people being taught like you don't get to just hug somebody or touch somebody without their permission, right you have to ask for permission and that concept of asking for permission and recognizing that somebody else has the ability to say no is a really important I think a foundational block in thinking about other people's body and respecting that autonomy. And then over time right when you're getting into high school that idea of bodily autonomy and consent in a personal, sexual intimate relationship, I think evolves to where children understand that taking somebody's picture out of context and placing it in on that, that is non-consensual. Sex education programming that follows the national sex ed standards would also be one that is sharing with young people and helping them understand the laws and rules that apply to their state and community. That's also being done in a context where media literacy and understanding around pornography and explicit images and non-consensual image sharing is all being discussed openly and clearly. And so, with that kind of foundation young people, you know these boys in this particular situation, would understand, 1. they're doing something that is non-consensual, 2. the laws may prohibit these things and then 3. engaging in social media activity or online activity that is non-consensual and against the law is going to be harmful and impactful.

Nora added We need to have empathy and to fully humanize everyone and have a sense of equity in our classroom so that people recognize the damage that can be done from doing these kinds of things.

Jan shared another question. How do we fight this, the amount of hate that you see? I mean I thought I saw a lot of hate when I was doing HIV, AIDS education, focused particularly at LGBTQ people, but this is going so far beyond?

Chris said, it is really appalling and so sad because we know that the context of these attacks are happening and can be really devastating for individuals. We have always had young people who had different sexual orientations, who had different racial identities, who had different gender identities, and now we are simply learning the language and the words to be able to explore this and understand this for ourselves. And for our young people, I think a lot of the fear that people are experiencing is that they're being asked to talk about issues that for so long we as a society have suppressed and not spoken about even though there were people amongst us who hold these identities. I think that for parents being able to navigate that with their young people it also helps them get a little less afraid of the idea of somebody's body being different from themselves.

Nora added, I think the one other element is we've given megaphones to a very small group of people. It used to be that in all of our national surveys and what teachers would tell you is that they hear from maybe one parent, two parents out of a class of 25, maybe one kid was opted out, but now all of a sudden those folks have a big platform and they have a very loud megaphone and so it sounds like there's so many more of them and their hate speech is really proliferating, but really they still don't represent by any means a majority. It's just their outsized influence that makes it feel a lot more lopsided than it actually is.

Jan: I have another issue that I wanted to bring up and that is the question of trans girls and sports. That's been a hot issue. We've had a couple of CWI sessions about it and it doesn't seem to be resolving so to speak. There doesn't seem to be overwhelming medical evidence on one side or the other, is there anything that we know that's new about this?

Nora said, that's a big one, I know we've got initiatives around this. I think for us one of the things that we often reflect on is how many students are we talking about. Sometimes we make laws that might impact one or two students and they just want to be part of a team and play a sport. So, while I recognize the important advancements that equity and equality efforts have played around leveling the playing field for female athletes, I also want us to just keep it in perspective. We're not talking about very many students at all and we would never keep students off a team if they weren't able to run as fast, if they weren't quite as tall, if they weren't able to lift as much as others. It's just around allowing all students who want to participate in extracurriculars have a chance to do so.

Chris noted the other factor is the way in which they administer or enforce these laws seem particularly invasive and damaging for any young person who is trying to play a sport. So I would also name that as a place where the enforcement apparatus is quite invasive.

Jill Christianson noted the Unitarian Universalist Association has a very long history of dealing with Our Whole Lives, which is sexuality education, from early childhood to seniors. I'm interested in your insights from Advocates for Youth and SIECUS of whether there are civil society organizations that are doing good sexuality education?

Nora responded, Yeah, Our Whole Lives is one of my favorites. We always encourage schools to check it out because it has universal values and there's so much in there, so much richness that so many schools can utilize it. In addition, there's some really good programs for example, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts has a really excellent program called Get Real in middle school and high school. It's really inclusive. It's youth-centered, it's one of the best that I know about. Additionally, there's one out of the Seattle King County Department of Public Health called Family, Love, Sexual Health Flash that's been around for about 30 years, it's got some promising results particularly around sexual violence prevention as it relates to sex education. It went through some large-scale evaluations. And one that I love, here in New Jersey, is Teen Pep, the Prevention Education Program. It uses high school juniors and seniors and trains them as peer educators to provide workshops for middle schoolers and upper elementary students.

Chris: Thanks, Nora, I would definitely co-sign Nora's recommendations. Obviously, Advocates for Youth has the three R program, which I think is exceptionally beneficial, and being online and able to be used in a lot of places. We also work with advocates as a part of a collective called the Sex Ed Collaborative and then through that partnership have relationships with organizations across the country who are offering sex education programs to meet the needs of their young people. So, I would recommend checking them out if you're looking for a particular curriculum that conforms to your local needs.

Sue Klein asked now we hear that there are ways to control the timing and frequency of menstrual periods and I was wondering what the medical information is on that and particularly what sex education should be informing parents and students about this is this. Is it a good idea or bad idea for young students, for older people, what's the latest? Nora responded, are you talking about some of the side effects of various methods of hormonal contraception that cause someone to not have a menstrual period for a number of months and years. Is that what you're thinking of? I just want to make sure I'm clear. Sue Klein: Where people can control how often they have their menstrual periods with drugs and things like that, should that be considered?

Nora: Well, my perspective is that we always encourage young people to make these decisions in consultation with a healthcare professional. I am not trained as a healthcare professional, so I just like to be very upfront about that, but I certainly know a lot of people who personally find that their cramps or their endometriosis or their periods are so heavy

and debilitating that trying to lighten and lessen them. It is really advantageous for them in terms of daily activities, so they don't have to miss school or miss out on sports events or anything like that. Whether that's true for everyone who has a uterus in menstruation or whether that's true for everyone for a few years, I would defer to medical professionals to be in the best position to do that. But certainly, many kinds of birth control pills and some kinds of IUDs, implants, rings, shots, patches, also have that as a beneficial side effect which a lot of young people, a lot of adults find to be terrific. And there's no health concern about someone not menstruating every month, there's nothing damaging about that because one of the side effects of these hormonal methods is that the lining just doesn't build up to the same degree or at all so there's nothing to leave the body every month in a typical period, so that's some of the science behind it. But I would just really encourage them to talk with their own healthcare provider and figure out what's best for them and their body.

Chris added I would just agree with that, I do think that in a sex education curriculum it would be important for folks to understand the different types of contraception and medical resources that are available to help people navigate these sorts of decisions for themselves. Because you know, I know that when I was in school it was like just take birth control and then it was like, oh there's like a billion kinds and they all have different impacts, and you should like to know what that is.

June 25, 2024 CWI Elections

This year most of the CWI board members are continuing with the second year of their 2 year term. However, Kathy Chiron has agreed to run for Secretary for 2025 to 2027. Holly Taggart Joseph, our long time treasurer has agreed to continue and so has Loretto Gubernatis, Vice President of Media Outreach. CWI Members who attend the June 25, 2024 Zoom meeting will be asked to stay to the end of the meeting to elect the three CWI Board Members for term 2025-2027.

CWI's newsletter is endowed in loving memory of our previous longtime editor, Roslyn Kaiser

Newsletter edited by Sue Klein

CWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JULY 2023– JUNE 2025

OFFICERS: Co-Presidents, Sue Klein and Jan Erickson; Holly Taggart Joseph, Treasurer; Connie Cordovilla, VP Membership; Sheila Wickouski; VP Women and the Arts; Loretto Gubernatis; VP Media Outreach; Jeanette Lim Esbrook; VP Legal Affairs; Sherry Klein; VP Technology; Anne Martin, VP Organizational Management; Alotta Taylor, VP Diversity, Denise Hyater - Lindenmuth, VP Women's Health

To join or renew membership in the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues go to :

[CWI Membership form-pdf fillable](#) also on CWI website on

<https://womensclearinghouse.org/membership/>

To sign up for announcements of free CWI Meetings go

to: <https://womensclearinghouse.org/subscribe-for-free-cwi-meeting-notifications/>



September 2024 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (CWI)
Meeting Invitation and Newsletter
<https://womensclearinghouse.org>

ARE WE READY FOR THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION?

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 (12:00 noon-1:00 pm ET)

Zoom Meeting Registration Link

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApmorjwiHtRC2_MZGFCpNQz79Kah67k5

Experts from the Brennan Center for Justice will cover what we need to know about recent improvements and remaining challenges for voting access, election administration, and security, and the use of mis and disinformation, possible AI interventions, cyber attacks and challenges to counting and certification. Additionally, an expert from the Center for American Progress will discuss how Project 2025 developed by the Heritage Foundation, if adopted by a future administration would fundamentally undermine our representative democracy. In emphasizing women and elections this presenter will provide suggestions for messaging to your family and friends about the threats.

LIZ HOWARD is Director of Partner Engagement for the Brennan Center's Elections & Government Program. Her work focuses on election security. Howard regularly comments for television, radio, and print media on issues relating to election security and election administration and has testified before U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security and in a variety of state legislatures. She has also co-authored multiple Brennan Center reports and white papers: *Better Safe Than Sorry (2018)*, *Defending Elections: Federal Funding Needs for State Election Security (2019)*, *Trump-Russia Investigations: A Guide Preparing for Cyberattacks and Technical Failures: A Guide for Election Officials (2019)*. Prior to joining the Brennan Center, Howard served as deputy commissioner for the Virginia Department of Elections. During her tenure, she coordinated many election administration modernization projects, including the decertification of all paperless voting systems, implementation of the e-Motor Voter program, and adoption of online, paperless absentee ballot applications, for which the department received a Bright Ideas Award at the Harvard Kennedy School. Howard earned her JD from the William & Mary Law School and received the Alumnus of the Year award from the William & Mary Election Law Society.

ALICE CLAPMAN is a senior counsel in the Brennan Center's Voting Rights Program, where she works on topics such as mass voter challenges, voter roll purges, voter ID requirements, state voting laws, and election administration. She recently authored *How States Can Prevent Election Subversion in 2024 and Beyond* for the Brennan Center. Before joining the Brennan Center, she litigated reproductive rights cases and did policy work for Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Prior to that, she taught clinics, practiced, and wrote in the field of immigration law and clerked for federal trial and appellate courts. Alice earned her JD from Yale Law School, and her BA from Princeton University.

COLIN SEEBERGER a senior adviser for Communications at the Center for American Progress (CAP) will share their messaging research on the threat of Project 2025 to give attendees more tools to effectively communicate. He will focus on the impact of various policies on issues with an acute impact on women and elections. Prior to joining CAP, Seeberger held various roles in public affairs and directed issue advocacy campaigns at Young Invincibles, a young adult policy and advocacy nonprofit organization. He previously worked on the national public affairs team at Berlin Rosen and in the press office of Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA). Seeberger also has a background in research, having worked with Grindstone Research. He studied political management with a concentration in strategic communications at George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management and graduated summa cum laude from Pace University in New York City.

The next CWI Zoom meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2024 at noon ET.

Some 2024 Get out the Vote Activities of CWI Member Organizations

The National Women’s Health Network: #4Her2024 Get Out the Vote campaign: **Sign up for Voter Empowerment Alerts:** <https://ncnw.org/eight-state-all-state/>. **“Check out “How to Vote 101” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://nwhn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/How_to_vote-101_NWHN_Updated_7_2_24.pdf**

The National Council of Negro Women has: NCNW Eight State/All State Strategy designed to significantly increase voter turnout, specifically among Black women and young voters ages 17-24. Strategies involve voter registration, canvassing, phone banking, and voter education. <https://ncnw.org/eight-state-all-state/>

Feminist Majority. Vote for Equality 2024 Campaign; https://jobs.feminist.org/job/posit_LWVUSions-available-with-vote-for-equality-2024-campaign/

Recruiting campus organizers and coordinators for a student voter mobilization campaign to deliver a massive student vote to advance gender equity, reproductive freedom, gun control, climate change, civil and LGBTQ rights and democracy in Arizona, California, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Other Election Tools from Selected Organizations

Organization	Website/contact info	Opportunity	Description	
League of Women Voters US LWVUS	vote411.org	One stop-shop for non-partisan information for voters.	Links for registration and information on candidate and ballot initiatives for any US address.	
The Workers Circle	circle.org	Phone banking every Wednesday 7 - 8pm	Voters of color in North Carolina face barriers to the polls. We call Black voters to learn which issues are most important to them, help them make a voting plan, and know the Voter ID they need to cast their ballot.	The Workers Circle works in partnership with the Center for Common Ground and Team Unity North Carolina, a grassroots organization that is educating and mobilizing Black voters in North Carolina. Register to make calls on one or more Wednesdays with us!
		Text banking. Tuesdays, September 24, October 29, 7:00 PM ET	Help Voters Get the ID They Need to Vote	Join our virtual text bank alongside Vote Riders, tailored to individuals of all generations, aimed at educating Florida voters about Voter ID laws and assisting them in obtaining the necessary identification they need to vote.

Center for Common Ground	https://www.centerforcommonground.org/phonebanks	Post carding - deadline for mailing to Virginia, Georgia and North Carolina is September 30. Arizona, Florida and Texas can be mailed between October 1 and 15.	writing GOTV messages to Black voters	Write to: Roxane, Nancy, Kim and Susan. They can be reached at rovdcmv@gmail.com to order supplies and learn the procedure for participating.
VoProPros	info@vopropros.com	Concentrating on Pennsylvania but also working in Nevada and other swing states	Phone calls to inactive voters to prevent their being eliminated from the rolls.	Note: they communicate using Slack which may not be everyone's favorite.
Poll Worker Resources	Poll Worker Resources for Voters U.S. Election Assistance Commission (eac.gov)	State by State Compendium, Requirements for Serving as a Pollworker (eac.gov)	Key Facts About U.S. Poll Workers, Key facts about US poll workers ahead of the 2024 election Pew Research Center	
View Election Jobs Near You	Election Jobs (Hiring Now!) - Employment.org			
ReThink Media	https://rethinkmedia.us1.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=307726d92ec941f6b4f544310&id=3e305aa083	Weekly listing of Democracy related news articles		
DemCast	https://www.digitaldrumbeat.com/?emci=c897c817-095c-ef11-991a-6045bddbfc4b&emdi=dbe6561b-185c-ef11-991a-6045bddbfc4b&ceid=29904014	Democracy messaging resource.	Rallying Americans to help defeat disinformation on social media. DemCast monitors messaging guidance from across the pro-democracy movement and delivers it to you here so you can spread word on social media.	
National Association of Secretaries of State	https://www.nass.org/Can-I-Vote	Answers questions from most states		
Vote.org Non-partisan, non-profit	Vote.org	Tools to help: Register to Vote, Request mail-in ballot, find polling locations, get election reminders		
Common Cause www.commoncause.org	www.commoncause.org/voting-tools	Register to vote, track your ballot, request absentee ballot, info on state voting laws	Volunteer to be poll monitor Protectthevote.net	

Update and Review of June 25, 2024 CWI Meeting on “Changes and Challenges in the 2024 Title IX Regulations”

UPDATE: Since the June 25 meeting there has not been much good news on compliance with the Aug. 1, 2024 start date implementing the 2024 Title IX Regulations. In fact, because of temporary injunctions granted in the various litigation challenges against the 2024 regulations, more than half the states, and many individual schools outside of those states, are currently not required to comply with the 2024 Title IX Regulations. Regarding procedures for addressing sex-based harassment, they are only required to comply with the less desirable 2020 Title IX Regulations from the Trump Administration pending further court orders. The Department of Education added information on the specific injunctions to enforcing the Title IX 2024 Regulations to their Fact Sheet on the Implementation of the 2024 Title IX Regulations on July 31, 2024. (See “Fact Sheet: U.S. Department of Education’s 2024 Title IX Final rule Overview” (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/t9-final-rule-factsheet.pdf>)). The Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues and many other organizations have signed on to ‘ National Women’s Law Center’s Amicus Brief on August 13, 2024 (Defending Trans and Nonbinary Students’ Rights under Title IX (<https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024.08.13-NWLC-Amicus.pdf>)). There is still hope for full restoration of the implementation of the Title IX 2024 Regulations as the temporary injunctions are reviewed by the Court of Appeals. For example, even if the disastrous Congressional Review Act discussed by Shiwali, passes both the House and the Senate, President Biden would veto it.

REVIEW: In the June meeting we had an excellent discussion of the long-awaited 2024 Title IX Regulations from the U.S. Department of Education which are being attacked primarily because they have clarified anti-sex discrimination provisions relating to LBGTQI+ students, but also because they restore protections against sex-based harassment in schools and clarify accommodations that schools need to provide for students who terminate their pregnancies. As we celebrated the 52nd anniversary of Title IX, our experts helped us understand the key changes in the 2024 Title IX Regulations and how to make sure that they are implemented as planned despite the political and legal challenges.



Jeanette Lim Esbrook, a former Acting Assistant Secretary for the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights and CWI’s Vice President for Legal Affairs, served as Moderator and provided a brief history of Title IX Regulations and how she was involved in the development of the regulations on sexual assault and harassment.



Rebecca Amadi, Federal Policy Manager, GLSEN, which works to ensure that LBGTQI+ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment, described the justifications for and objections against the non-discrimination provisions relating to gender identity and sexual orientation in the 2024 Title IX Rules. She discussed why they were included in the Rules (including the Supreme Court Title VII Bostock decision), what they cover, and note that the promised Title IX Athletic Rules have not been released.



Shiwali Patel, Director of Safe and Inclusive Schools & Senior Counsel, National Women’s Law Center, who formerly worked in the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, described much of the current opposition to the 2024 Title IX Rule such as House Joint Resolution 165 and its companion Congressional Review Act in the Senate which would undo the new Title IX Rules as well as the litigation by 26 states and others against the April 2024 Title IX Regulations.



Karen Truskowski, representing Stop Sexual Assault in Schools (SSAIS) is an SSAIS Officer and attorney who represents K-12 and higher education Title IX plaintiffs. She discussed how the Title IX 2020 Regulations were changed in 2024 relating to the procedures to be used in handling complaints of sexual assault and harassment and to provide more explicit protections and support to pregnant and parenting students. She also discussed the roles of all school employees in notifying Title IX Coordinators of potential Title IX infractions. She described how she welcomed improvements in the 2024 Regulations such as the change to include severe **or** (not and) pervasive sexual harassment and removing the requirement for cross examination.

Some of the follow-up questions included: What are penalties for Non Compliance with Title IX? Jeanette said that contrary to myth, Federal funds had been withdrawn in at least one case and Shiwali and Karen pointed out that fines are also common in some cases. Sue Klein pointed out that the 2024 regulations did not mandate Title IX Coordinators in each k-12 school but they did require a Title IX Coordinator in each school district and postsecondary institution and they encouraged the Coordinators to designate other Coordinators and officials to help with Title IX responsibilities.

We strongly recommend that you view the YouTube of this entire meeting to fully benefit from this entertaining and informative meeting by going to: **June2024 – “Changes and Challenges in the 2024 Title IX Regulations”** (<https://youtu.be/mzdCJqTyrfE>)

Shiwali Patel from the National Woman’s Law Center also shared their [Summary and chart of the Title IX rule changes that NWLC developed](https://nwlc.org/resource/bidens-new-title-ix-rule-fact-sheet-and-chart/). (<https://nwlc.org/resource/bidens-new-title-ix-rule-fact-sheet-and-chart/>)

CWI’s newsletter is endowed in loving memory of our previous longtime editor, Roslyn Kaiser

Newsletter edited by Sue Klein

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Summary of September 24, 2024 CWI Meeting

“ARE WE READY FOR THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION?”

The two presenters **Alice Clapman**, Senior Counsel for Voting Rights from the Brennan Center’s Voting Rights Program and **Colin Seeberger** Senior Advisor for Communications at the Center for American Progress gave detailed and informative presentations as can be seen and heard in the linked video of the zoom meeting moderated by CWI Board members, Kathy Chiron and Jan Erickson. [September 2024 – “ARE WE READY FOR THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION?”](#) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieITMFNAaFA2024.09.24 – CWI Presentation.pptx>

Liz Howard, Director of Partner Engagement from the Brennan Center did not join the meeting but apologized for missing the meeting and submitted the following summary of what she had planned to say to start off the meeting.

“The typical election official is a 50-64 woman who makes about \$50k/year. (See [Stewards of Democracy](#).) Her office remains underfunded and under-resourced after she was informed that she is responsible for protecting our election infrastructure against foreign enemies, such as China and Iran. Threats against our election officials

have spiked since 2020, with 70% of election officials (according to our [local election official survey](#)) indicating threats have increased since 2020. 38% of election officials report that they have experienced threats, harassment, or abuse simply for doing their job. These threats are contributing to the high attrition rates we're seeing. In good news, our current corps of dedicated election officials remain undaunted in the face of these challenges. 92% of EOs have made election security improvements since 2020, and an increasing percentage of EOs are reporting threats to law enforcement. They are also expanding their collaboration with law enforcement. One important project that we support (along with R Street Institute, Protect Democracy, and The Elections Group) is the [Committee for Safe and Secure Elections](#), which works to build relationships between law enforcement and election officials, so both communities can work together to help keep election officials and voters safe.” Elizabeth included her slide deck which is worth a careful examination. It contains tables from the Brennan Center May 2024 “Local Election Officials Survey” and other information and can be seen here [2024.09.24 – CWI Presentation.pptx](#).



“**Alice Clapman** talked about key ways federal and state law and policymakers have strengthened election systems since 2020 to protect free and fair elections and the peaceful transfer of power, and about some of the remaining challenges and risks. The 2020 election exposed various pressure points in our elections, as bad actors tried to use these points to overturn the results. Since then, Congress has enacted the Electoral Count Reform Act, which sets some baseline protections for state and federal election "certification" processes. ("Certification" is the term for the legal process by which local and state officials and Congress sign off on the completion of election results.") Several states have gone further, clarifying their laws to ensure that state results are certified based solely on vote totals and that individual bad actors cannot obstruct the process. A few states have put in place new protections for absentee ballots, to ensure they're not rejected based on minor technicalities and that, when ballots are defective, voters have a meaningful opportunity to fix them. They've made improvements in protecting voters and election workers from intimidation, including 7 new state laws banning guns around polling places and other election sites and new election official protections in 17 states plus DC. They've strengthened election security and cybersecurity and gotten better at fighting disinformation and putting out accurate election information that increases public trust. Unfortunately, these improvements

are not uniform throughout the country (or even within each state), and some battleground states like North Carolina and Georgia are backsliding in important respects instead of advancing. It will take a broad, coordinated effort to ensure the 2024 elections are free and fair.



Colin Seeberger provided an overview of the Heritage Foundation Project 2025 and explained slides as he covered many of the threats to democracy and our many freedoms if the Project plans are enacted by the Republican allies of the Heritage Foundation either under a potential new Trump administration or otherwise. Many of his points focused on the dangerous impact on women. His slides are **here**. [From Colin Seeberger – Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues Project 2025](#)

Jan Erickson provided the following useful Links to Resources on Project 2025:

Ms. Magazine

[Misogynist Manifesto: Project 2025 Says Yes to ‘Biblically Based Marriages’ and No to Reproductive Rights - Ms. Magazine \(msmagazine.com\)](#)

Guttmacher Institute

[How Project 2025 Seeks to Obliterate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights | Guttmacher Institute](#)

**Americans United for Separation of Church and State,
Project 2025: The Christian Nationalist Plan Take Over America**
<https://www.au.org/project2025/>

Media Matters

Project 2025

<https://www.mediamatters.org/project-2025>

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