

Substantial Disruption



The Question Every Abortion Opponent Should Have to Answer

By Mike Tully

Cathi Herrod likes to tell people how to live their lives. She is the President of the [Center for Arizona Policy](#), a lobbying organization of officious moralists with outsized influence in the Arizona legislature. The Center's mission is to promote and defend "the foundational values of life, marriage and family, and religious freedom." That's code for banning abortion and birth control and hating on gay people. Herrod, who has led the group for a dozen years, says she envisions an Arizona where "human life is protected and defended from its very beginning to its natural end." The "very beginning" language means opposition to most, if not all, forms of birth control. The "natural end" language apparently includes state-sponsored homicide, since neither Herrod nor the Center have expressed discomfort with capital punishment.

Their primary *raison d'être* is opposition to abortion. Since the right to terminate a pregnancy with some limitations is enshrined as a Constitutional right, Herrod and the Center currently resort to abortion opponents' preferred tactics of restricting access to abortion providers and shaming women who elect to terminate their pregnancies. A bill currently working its way through the Arizona legislature falls into the latter category.

[Senate Bill 1394](#) is ostensibly a data gathering measure, which is hilarious on its face, given that Arizona legislative Republicans value data about as much as Beethoven valued a kazoo. The bill was crafted by Herrod and the Center, although some of the language was so indigestible that even the Arizona House coughed it up. The original bill, [which passed the Senate nearly intact](#), expanded upon information that providers are required to submit to the Department of Health Services. While the facility is not required to identify the woman having the abortion in either the existing legislation or Herrod's proposed expansion, the current inquiry is fairly intrusive. Besides asking the name, nature and location of the facility, current law asks for the age of the woman undergoing the procedure, along with her educational background, race and ethnicity, marital status, history of earlier pregnancies regardless how they ended, and a general question about the reason for the abortion. There is no evidence the data gathered so far has impacted public policy. The State is just being nosy.

Nevertheless, Herrod and her truth squad from the Center want to expand that last general question into a vast array of inquiries into things that are none of their business. They want women to answer whether the reason for the abortion is for any of the following:

- economic reasons.
- the woman does not want children at this time.
- the woman's emotional health is at stake.
- the woman's physical health is at stake.

- the woman will suffer substantial impairment of a major bodily function if the pregnancy continues.
- the pregnancy was the result of rape.
- the pregnancy was the result of incest.
- the pregnancy resulted in fetal anomalies.

They also want providers to ask about “relationship issues, including abuse, separation, divorce and extramarital affairs.” Who knew defenders of family values could be so lecherous?

Herrod’s bill includes a series of questions about complications, including sepsis and “postprocedure” infections. That list remains unchanged in the revised House version, even though medical complications from abortions are rare.

The [House modified the questions](#) about reasons for the procedure, eliminating, among others, the invasive shaming question about relationship histories and extramarital affairs. They expanded on health inquiries for both woman and fetus and retained language referring to rape and incest. The House added questions regarding whether the woman is being coerced into having the procedure, or whether she is a victim of sex trafficking or domestic violence. Representative Eddie Farnsworth, a Gilbert Republican who authored [the amendment](#), explained the legislation is about “getting information.” Representative Daniel Hernandez, a Tucson Democrat, took that to heart and suggested two other questions asking if the woman had access to affordable health care or “adequate comprehensive sex education.” [Capital Media Services reported](#) that Hernandez noted the debate’s underlying theme was that additional information would lead to fewer abortions. He said the questions he proposed would lead to fewer unintended pregnancies, which in turn would reduce the number of abortions.

Unfortunately, logic is a protocol unrecognized by Arizona legislative Republicans and Farnsworth rejected Hernandez’ amendment. “Sex education is not a health-care issue. Having access to contraception is not a health-care issue,” Farnsworth told him. “It’s a pre-health-care issue.” Given Farnsworth’s definition, vaccination is not a health care matter. On Planet Farnsworth, having a disease is a health care issue but preventing disease is not.

There is one question that should be asked, not of women having abortions, but of Herrod and the other fetus fascists who want to force women to give birth against their will: *since you are responsible for the child being born, what will you pay to support it?* If anti-abortion fanatics eventually get their way and outlaw abortion, any child borne involuntarily on account of their efforts is at least partially their responsibility. What are they willing to do to ensure the child receives adequate housing, nutrition, clothing, medical care, and education? Will they pay for postnatal care for the mother? Will they help with school supplies and transportation? Will they help with daycare expenses?

The Center’s website does not address these issues and [Herrod’s bio](#) does not hint at any interest on her part. Their concern for the child’s welfare is discarded with the placenta. Once birth takes place you’re on your own, kid. If you wind up dropping out, sitting in prison, or even strapped to a death gurney, oh well. That’s life.