

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Young Republicans Support Affordable Birth Control

Here's some good news amidst the furor over some congressional Republicans' angst about contraception and, for others, opposition to public funding of contraception: Almost two out of three younger Republicans say every adult woman should have access to affordable, effective birth control.

Why do they say that? Because they realize that birth control allows people to build families when they're ready, financially and emotionally, according to a report released Tuesday by Echelon Insights, an opinion research and analysis firm founded by two Republicans. Almost half of those polled said all birth control methods approved by the Federal Drug Administration should be covered by an employer's insurance without co-pay. Those without private insurance, these supporters said, should be covered by government funding. (Just one out of three of those polled disagreed.) Moreover, more young Republicans support the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive coverage requirement than oppose it.

In short, Republicans may not like Obamacare on the whole, but most young Republicans sure are OK with the contraceptive coverage.

Interestingly, according to the report's author, Kristen Soltis Anderson, co-founder of Echelon Insights and a respected Republican researcher, the more education those surveyed had, the less generous they were about affordability and availability, even if they thought those were serious problems.

On two related issues, the young Republicans surveyed sounded like their elders. Should birth control be sold over the counter? Forty-five percent said yes, but 32 percent said no.

And a majority of young women, as well as young men, said "birth control is more of a personal convenience than a health care need for adult women."

Really?

They explained themselves, Anderson said in an interview, by saying things like "Nobody is making you have sex, and you can buy condoms at CVS for \$5. You are responsible for your actions. Why should I as an employer have to pay?" Or, a young woman might say, "I can get my birth control pills at Walmart for \$25. No big deal."

Not surprisingly, perhaps, on most questions young Republican men did not support birth control in the same numbers as the women. Only 38 percent of them, for example, agreed that contraception should be included in preventative health care.

"Young men need encouragement," Anderson said. "They don't know what their role is in the conversation. To what extent do they have it with their partners? They're certainly not having it with their doctors."

For those of us who strongly support making all means of birth control accessible and affordable, there were several heartening numbers, given the political persuasion of those polled. Sixty-two percent approved of educational campaigns for young adults about all methods of birth control. Fifty percent favored increasing public funding for community organizations that offer contraceptive services and education.

Less encouraging was this: On a list of which 12 issues would most influence their vote in upcoming elections, birth control was at the bottom, coming after health care, government spending and the economy, among others.

Even so, no matter what the tenor of public discourse may be at any given time, the use of birth control remains almost ubiquitous and accepted in the United States. Consider:

There is widespread agreement among Americans that birth control is morally acceptable. Case in point: A survey released last week by the Public Religion Research Institute showed that less than 10 percent of millennials think birth control is morally wrong.

Most sexually active adults use birth control.

Almost all women -- Republicans as well as Democrats -- have used birth control in their lives.

To say it another way, although some elected officials may use their public pulpits to bash contraception, American women have voted with their use. Nothing that has been used by 90-plus percent of women of childbearing age can or should be considered controversial.

The research report was prepared by Anderson and Echelon Insights for The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, a non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy, especially among single, young adults. Stepp, a former reporter for the *Washington Post*, is a senior media fellow at the Campaign.