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March 24, 2011

The Honorable Kevin Meyer
Alaska State Senate

Dear Senator Meyer,

With respect to the following:

- 1) potential expansion of insurance coverage under Denali KidCare;
- 2) the fact that there is no statutory definition of 'medically necessary'; and
- 3) your quoted comment that it's one thing for a woman to have an abortion if her life is in danger and another if she feels having a baby will leave her depressed, I ask you to consider the following.

It is an incredible insult to women to suggest they are not capable of selecting a competent doctor and that said doctor is not competent to determine whether a given procedure is medically necessary.

As you certainly know, there is already a lot of incomprehensible language in our statutes; I shudder to think of the outcome should there be an effort to reduce something so complex as medical necessity to a laundry list of conditions that are the only things that merit insurance coverage. How detailed do you think such a list should be?

For example, common sense (which is not so common after all) might conclude that plastic surgery for breast reduction is not medically necessary. I suggest that absent some competence in medicine and knowledge of the specifics of a given case, such a conclusion would be foolish.

I know a woman whose breasts were so disproportionately large for her small body frame, that she suffered debilitating pain in her shoulders and back. Plastic surgery was indeed medically necessary and having the surgery freed her of a condition that was seriously undermining her ability to work and to care for her family.

I'm confident that intelligent men who genuinely care about health care can come to understand that abortion is a subject best left to a woman, her doctor, her spiritual advisor and any others that she personally invites to assist her with a decision.

A careful reading of Roe v. Wade will inform one that it does not sanction abortion without limitations. The time and money and anguish that has taken place since its passage because people have used laws and courts in an effort to impose their personal views on the rest of us is total nonsense. That much maligned decision is both clear and excellent public policy.

Please work to eliminate the demeaning of women and doctors when considering decisions related to women's reproductive health.

Yes, there are quack doctors and yes, there are women who – for a variety of reasons may have an abortion when a condom or a morning after pill might have help avoid that situation altogether.

But in a society where some people consider using contraception as on a level with murder, it seems clear that this subject will require calm, thoughtful, educated discussion rather than the present efforts across the states to return women to the subservient position some think they deserve simply because they are women.

Respectfully,



Theda Pittman

Cc: Senator Bettye Davis