

Our View

State's 'informational material' contains too much flawed information

The decision about whether to have an abortion is a highly personal and highly emotional issue.

An informational publication by the Texas Department of State Health Services advises women to “talk to your doctor, counselor or spiritual adviser about your feelings.”

That’s good advice. However, reading the entire paragraph contains troubling information.

“No one can force you to have an abortion, not even your parents or the father of your baby. If you are feeling pressure (also called coercion) from someone to have an abortion, you have options. Talk to your doctor, counselor or spiritual adviser about your feelings, and ask for a phone to call 9-1-1 for immediate help?”

Call 9-1-1? Short of stopping someone physically trying to perform the abortion, we’re not sure what law enforcement could or should do.

And what if someone is trying to pressure (also called coercion) a woman from exercising her legal right to have an abortion, who should she call? The informational handout

doesn’t say.

In fact, the handout — which doctors are required to give women considering an abortion — is notable in what it doesn’t say.

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported 0.73 legal abortion-related deaths per 100,000 reported legal abortions in the United States from 2008-2011,” according to the handout.

That’s less than one in 100,000 procedures. As any doctor would tell you, all surgical procedures have a certain risk.

“Women report a range of emotions after an abortion. This can include depression or thoughts of suicide,” according to the handout.

However, this is from the American Psychological Association website:

“The Task Force concluded that there is no credible evidence that a single elective abortion of an unwanted pregnancy in and of itself causes mental health problems for adult women.”

And finally this tidbit. “Your pregnancy history

affects your chances of getting breast cancer. If you give birth to your baby, you are less likely to develop breast cancer in the future.”

The National Cancer Institute, though, found that studies prior to the mid-1900s “were flawed in a number of ways that can lead to unreliable results ... newer studies consistently showed no association between induced and spontaneous abortions and breast cancer risk.”

It’s interesting that of the five sources the state used in the handout concerning breast cancer, two were from studies about women in China, one from India and fourth an international study. They didn’t source the National Cancer Institute.

But there is one part of the handout that is correct. The decision about an abortion is a personal one. It is an emotional one that should be discussed with a doctor, counselor or spiritual adviser.

As for the handout? It’s so flawed that a good high school debate team could have a field day with it.

• Dave Mathews

Senate Democrats plan to ‘Ashcroft’ Jeff Sessions

There’s been talk among Republicans that Democrats are plotting to “Bork” the nomination of Sen. Jeff Sessions to be attorney general. That’s not right. What Democrats really hope to do is to “Ashcroft” him.

Sixteen years ago, John Ashcroft was a Republican senator nominated by a Republican president who lost the popular vote but won the Electoral College.

Guest Column



Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner

The 2000 race also left the Senate split 50-50, with Republican Vice President Dick Cheney breaking ties. The Judiciary Committee was split 9-to-9, with a Republican chairman.

If Democrats could stick together, they could hold Ashcroft to a 9-9 tie in committee, which would have allowed the nomination to go on to the full Senate, but would also have allowed Democrats to portray it as a vote of

no confidence in a top George W. Bush appointee.

Democrats attacked Ashcroft furiously. They extended the hearings to four days, called a long slate of outside witnesses, and attempted to portray Ashcroft as a kind of neo-Confederate, hyper-religious abortion fanatic.

Ashcroft won the committee vote, 10 to 8, only because Democratic Sen. Russ Feingold voted to move the nomination to the floor.

Now, Republicans have a 52-48 advantage in the Senate and will likely have a one-vote advantage on the Judiciary Committee. A party-line vote would win for Sessions. But that hasn’t stopped Democrats from looking back to the Ashcroft precedent.

In a letter to Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, eight Democrats — Patrick Leahy, Dianne Feinstein, Richard Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Amy Klobuchar, Al Franken, Chris Coons and Richard Blumenthal — demanded the committee hear from witnesses who will discuss Sessions’ views on “immigration; violence against women; civil rights, including LGBT protections; racial justice and hate crimes; workers’ rights; national security and civil liberties; voting rights; criminal justice; and government conflicts of interest, transparency and oversight.”

Sessions will receive a “tough vetting,” promised Schumer.

Grassley is not ready to go along. “The confirmation process of John Ashcroft to be attorney general turned into a reckless campaign that snowballed into an avalanche of innuendo, rumor and spin,” the chairman said in a statement. “That will not happen here.”

The bottom line from Republicans: No Ashcrofting.

Sessions has, of course, seen it all, from both sides. He was famously rejected by the committee in 1986 when he was nominated to a seat on the U.S. District Court in Alabama.

Sessions went on to win a Senate seat in 1996, took a place on the Judiciary Committee, and was a vocal advocate for Ashcroft in the committee in 2001. He knows what is coming. But he also knows votes, and this time Republicans on the committee will have more votes than Democrats.

The GOP can exercise more control over the hearing and witnesses than they could in the 9-to-9 days of the Ashcroft nomination. If Sessions can keep the support of all the Republicans on the committee, he won’t face a repeat of the Ashcroft experience.



Get informed about voting rights

The November 2016 election was the first presidential election in 50 years without the full protections of the Voting Rights Act at work to protect the right to vote of black, Latino, Native American, Asian and other voters of color.

On the evening of Nov. 7 at Reedy Chapel A.M.E. Church in Galveston just hours before Election Day, Senior Counsel Leah Aden from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York City presented a live nonpartisan training session entitled — “Prepared To Vote Election Protection Training Texas” that covered the recent federal court order striking down portions of the Texas Voter ID law as well as other efforts to preserve the voting rights of historically underserved

Guest Column



Interfaith.

Steve McIntyre is a lawyer and leader with Gulf Coast

Texas communities.

Aden is on the team of lawyers who successfully defeated the State of Texas and obtained a favorable federal court order similar to the recent federal court orders striking down portions of the Voter ID law in Wisconsin and North Carolina.

The Galveston training session was organized by Gulf Coast Interfaith leader Cornelia Harris-Banks and was part of the effort of Election Protection, a national nonpartisan

coalition formed to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. The coalition is made up of over 100 local, state and national partners and works year round to advance and defend the right to vote.

The local training was conducted in partnership with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Galveston Northside Task Force, Galveston Coalition for Justice, NAACP Galveston Council No. 6180 and LULAC Galveston Council’s No. 151 and No. 22270. In the last several years all of these groups except LC-CRUL have been involved in reviewing, criticizing and filing objections with the United States Department of Justice to enforce the Voting Rights Act in Galveston County. Previous local action

to enforce the Voting Rights Act can be found at the Gulf Coast Interfaith website under Democracy at the Resources and News buttons.

Copies of the Nov. 7th training session materials are available from Harris-Banks and extensive excerpts of the training session from the live TV broadcast of the training session on The “Not Your Ordinary Joe” Show hosted by GCI leader Joe Compian can be viewed at <http://gulfcoastinterfaith.org/resources/democracy>.

The basic material from this training eve training will remain relevant for many years but may be partially modified and expanded by U.S. District Judge Nelva Ramos in her upcoming final order addressing the serious violations of the Voting Rights Act by the State of Texas.

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