

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statement by Belle Taylor-McGhee, President and CEO, Pacific Institute for Women's Health, on Bush Administration's Issuance of Regulations that Restrict Women's Access to Reproductive Healthcare.

Oakland/Los Angeles – Once again, the Bush Administration has struck a blow to women's timely access to vital healthcare services. Today's announcement that the new provider conscientious rule is now in effect is a somber reminder that we must push even harder to protect women's health.

Intended to provide further protections for federally-funded health care entities and health care employees, this regulation will allow employees to refuse vital health care services that they find objectionable, including abortion, tubal ligation and even contraception.

Moreover, the regulation is unclear and unnecessary – even the Bush Administration's own officials at the Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) have stated the duplicity that these 'new' regulations create. For example, providers will be able to refuse care, yet are not obligated to refer the patient to another provider or make the patient aware about the health care services they are being denied. In reality, the rule will restrict, and in some parts of the country, severely prohibit timely access to reproductive health care to the most vulnerable populations, particularly some women in rural communities who rely on federally-funded clinics.

Although not surprising, it is unfortunate that the Administration showed such indifference to the thousands of letters advocates sent from around the country expressing their concerns about this unnecessary rulemaking. PIWH will be working with our reproductive justice allies, both locally and nationally, to encourage President –Elect Obama to reverse this dangerous regulation. We urge the new President to better address the needs and protect the rights of women in order to have unfettered access to safe reproductive health care services.

Founded in 1993, PIWH works to increase the ability of women and girls to make informed decisions about their sexuality and reproductive health.

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