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USA

The U.S. Right also Wants to Get Rid of Birth Control

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Having succeeded two years ago in overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that previously provided federal protection for abortion rights, and then having passed abortion restrictions in several states that have virtually eliminated abortion, the right is now advocating that birth control pills should be eliminated.

Claiming to be defending women who might be harmed by hormonal contraception, and arguing that they are also protecting women's dignity and the family, rightwing social media has begun a campaign to end recreational sex. Getting rid of the birth control pill they suggest is a feminist issue, good for women's bodies and their souls.

The right's ideological arguments against the pill, like their arguments against abortion, are couched in terms of defending the family and women themselves. The conservative Heritage Foundation states that "...conservatives have to lead the way in restoring sex to its true purpose, and ending recreational sex and senseless use of birth control pills."

Rightwing activist Charles Rufo claims that, "The pill causes health problems for many women. 'Recreational sex' is a large part of the reason we have so many single-mother households, which drives poverty, crime, and dysfunction. The point of sex is to create children—this is natural, normal, and good."

One rightwing woman commentator, speaking on X, suggests the birth control pill has often caused women serious psychological problems and led to recreational sex that was often "loveless and degrading." She says that there should be "a feminist movement for rewilding sex and returning the danger, the intimacy, and the consequentiality to sex." In this way, she says, women can "reconnect with the fullness of our embodied nature." Republican politicians have taken up these arguments and some propose to restrict or ban the pill.

Most women are highly unlikely to buy this argument. The birth control pill has been widely used since 1960 by tens of millions of women over the last 70 years, and though the pill may not be the best form of contraception for all women, and while a relatively small percentage of women suffer adverse effects, the pill has allowed women to take control of their own lives.

The pill is often talked about in terms of the "sexual revolution" but it has been part and parcel of the movement for women's liberation. The pill, widely used by both single and married women, made it possible for women to plan their careers and their families and, yes, to have sex for pleasure when they wanted to. Working class, and poor women no longer had to have children that they couldn't afford and support or so many children that they would be overwhelmed with domestic labor and emotionally exhausted. Most teenage girls have their first sexual intercourse at 16 or 17 years of age, but some earlier, and so many parents often try to protect them from unwanted pregnancies by arranging with a doctor for them to take birth control pills.

A recent national poll by Americans for Contraception, as reported in *The New York Times*, found that 80 percent of voters stated that protecting access to contraception was "deeply important" to them, and even among Republicans 72 percent view birth control favorably. Still, Republican politicians will likely try to restrict birth control pills. Just this month in the state of Arizona, Democrats put forward a bill to protect access to all forms of birth control, but the Republicans there voted it down. Women and their allies will have to be on guard against another attack on their freedom.

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