

BILL TOWNSEND

Our New Voice in Congress

P O L I C Y O V E R V I E W

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Bill Townsend is a strong advocate for women, determined to focus on 10 key areas that will enhance women's safety and protections, provide support for children, early age care, healthcare, and address pay inequality, the root cause of abortion, education, and more.

The past year has seen women around the world stand up against harassment, discrimination, and for protected rights. You stood up against the wage gap, the education gap, the health gap, political representation that didn't support your needs, and you've called for more school safety, access to birth control, and opportunities for young children, such as Head Start.

As your voice in Congress, I will to push for legislation to ensure women's rights are protected and expanded, while protecting the rights of all to create true equality in our country.

Following are ten areas I pledge to focus to improve women's lives and bridge the gap.

1. Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which was passed by Congress on March 22, 1972, and sent to the states for ratification by both houses of their state legislatures. Nevada ratified the Equal Rights Amendment in early 2017, 45 years to the day after it was passed by Congress and sent to states. In ratifying the ERA, Sen. Pat Spearman, a North Las Vegas Democrat who pushed the resolution, said correctly, "Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights."

The ERA is straightforward:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after

the date of ratification.

A proposed amendment becomes part of the Constitution when approved by three-fourths (38) of the 50 states. The original seven-year time limit was extended by Congress to June 30, 1982, but at that deadline, the ERA had been ratified by only 35 states, three states short of the 38 required to put it into the Constitution. With the addition of Nevada, only two more states need to vote in favor of the ERA.

I would like my and your daughters to be able to read the Constitution and see that men and women are persons of equal stature under the laws of the United States of America. I will work with members of Congress from those states that have not yet ratified the ERA to try to convince them to take the message back home that the Equal Rights Amendment should be ratified and finally made part of the Constitution.

2. It is time we enact laws to provide paid maternity and adoption leave. The United States is one of just three countries out of 195 in the world that doesn't offer paid maternity leave, the others being Oman and Papua New Guinea. Think about that...we are part of the 2% that doesn't have laws governing paid maternity leave.

As your voice in Congress, I will dedicate my efforts to passing legislation regarding maternity leave and adoption. The law will address the following as a base for benefits but may have better benefits as well.

The law should apply to all employers with five or more employees.

- The law will prohibit discrimination on the basis of

gender and pregnancy.

- Employees who work at least 35 hours per week are entitled to up to six weeks of parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child with 4 weeks paid.
- Employees can receive a minimum of 65% of their salary during their leave and receive an additional 15% when they return to work completion of their leave. This will provide 80% of their base salary. You might ask, “Why not 100%?” The remaining 20% is needed by companies to help underwrite the cost of overtime and part-time hires needed to cover the workload of the new mother while they are on leave, and/or to pay for recruiting of a new employee should the mother not return to work.
- Employees electing to adopt would be entitled to receive \$1,000 dollars for adoption expenses and up to 2 weeks leave at 65% of their salary, with an additional 15% paid upon their return to work.

When businesses fail to do what is right in addressing the 47 million women who work, Congress needs to step up and make reasonable laws that will strengthen the family.

3. School safety requires more action than what current Members of Congress and the Administration propose.

As the parent of 4 children and uncle of 3 more, you have my solemn word that I will push, push and push some more for my plan for school safety, which will help ensure our children are able to learn in a safe environment. (You can read about this in School Safety, found on the “12 Big Ideas for Nevada” page or download it from the Downloads page.)

4. I will fight for “Equal Pay for Equal Results” legislation.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 made it illegal for employers to pay men more than women performing the same job, and yet more than 55 years later the gender wage gap still persists. Maybe it’s time to try something new!

Supporting opportunities for all Americans has to be one of our priorities to ensure jobs are created and accessible to men and women. One way to make sure the economy rewards hard work for every single person, regardless of gender, is “Equal Pay for Equal Results”. I’ve implemented this in each of my companies and it works.

“Equal Pay for Equal Results” means that men and women are compensated based on equal results. Why not equal pay for equal work? Because that isn’t how business works. People who perform better than others typically earn more than others. This is called lifting the boat. When someone excels they can earn more. When they don’t, they don’t. This is fair

for men and women and rewards someone based on results, not gender.

By focusing on results, you achieve pay that is commensurate with your own actions. That is the fairest form of compensation available.

In my experience through a dozen companies I have founded or co-founded and those I worked for, depending on the role, women often outperform men. In some cases, such as physically demanding work, men often outperform women.

Equal Pay for Equal Results means that regardless of gender, if you achieve the goals of your position, you should be paid equally to another person who also achieves the same goals. This is the fairest way to ensure compensation between the genders is equalized.

The problem for proposals pushed in Congress over the past two decades is that wide variations within any given job category and equally wide variations in the education that men and women bring to their work is almost impossible to justify. Equal pay discussions focus on creating a model that says, two people of different educational backgrounds—for instance, a Harvard graduate and a community college graduate—hired for the same position, must be paid the same. Another example, for instance, a definition of the medical profession that lumps together pediatricians and neurosurgeons misses huge differences in training and skills. What this model can’t take into account is each relevant variable that matters to a skilled manager or recruiter, even after controlling for hours worked or, most critically, years out of the work force. Such issues as willingness to travel, working overtime in dangerous neighborhoods, making cold calls to prospective customers, handling risk, or responding to hostility in interpersonal relations are relevant in how much an employee is paid. The effect of any one of these variables could be small, but in aggregate, they can have a direct influence in the salary someone is offered.

Why does “Equal Pay for Equal Results” work? As our global economy has grown and competition no longer comes from the company in the next town, but instead from countries including China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics, the importance of replacing a “face-time” work culture (for instance, you show up and put your 40 hours in) with a results-oriented workforce (you don’t get compensated based on hours worked, but instead, results) becomes more relevant to success. Isn’t this what women have been seeking all along: to be judged fairly and based on their skills? Yes. In addition, companies that facilitate flexible work and results-oriented measurement see higher engagement, productivity and retention rates—not

to mention better returns and greater pay equality for men and women. In my experience, this leads superiors to manage the work instead of managing the people which results in increased employee satisfaction, more productivity, fewer sick days taken, and greater communication between all levels of the organization. This level of open discussion can lead to even greater advancements for women (and families) with companies beginning to understand the benefits of on-site child care, flexible work hours, a “stepping up” of employees to cover the workload of a new mother, and a change in women’s ability to ask for a raise because it can be based on something tangible.

5. We will put more focus on anti-violence initiatives.

Globally, one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. Most often, the abuser is a member of her own family. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, more than car accidents, rapes, and muggings combined. Domestic abuse has historically been defined as between a husband and wife but with the increasing numbers of women (and men) who are shunning marriage, and same gender relationships, it needs to be expanded to include all relationships outside of marriage.

Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery impacting our most vulnerable populations, and it is a serious problem in Nevada largely due to our tourism industries that warrants our full attention. It is a brutal, complex, and widespread crime in which children are used in commercial sex and adults are targeted through force, fraud or coercion to engage in activity against their will. Thousands of victims are shipped into Nevada every year with many children under the age of 13. Shockingly, calls about human trafficking made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, ranked Las Vegas 6th among the 100 most populous cities in America and 5th based on per capita population.

Children resettling to America from war torn countries and victims of sex trafficking face obstacles many of us cannot imagine. They very likely require rehabilitation, both mental and physical, for which most adoptive parents are not prepared. Early intervention can prevent long-term harm. For adoption of refugee children and those who have been victims of sex trafficking, we should provide vouchers for psychologist and psychiatric care up to \$2,500.

Creating educational opportunities and other resources to rehabilitate victims of domestic violence, physical abuse and sex trafficking, along with awareness campaigns to educate women to stand up against violence will help empower women and children to stand up for themselves. This is important because many women don’t even report violence. Often,

they’re scared due to current laws. Some feel they are responsible for the act. Still others are afraid that reporting violence may result in divorce, thus leaving them more vulnerable to poverty. Since this is such an important problem that needs to be fixed, it should be addressed in a big way – and women should not have to live in fear.

6. I will write legislation that outlines a better, more protective path for women to come forward when harassed in the workplace that would form the core of what should be adopted by all government agencies and companies. Laws must be changed to protect the identity of the accused and accuser; provide for a fair means to investigate and determine the extent of any harassment; create standards of proof, set minimum guidelines for resolution, such as providing options for transfer within a company, punishment for the offenders, etc.; and provide confidentiality for all parties in order to protect the work environment.

7. We must address the problem of access to affordable birth control in America. After hours and hours of researching the abortion issue, including talking to over 200 women, I had a revelation. America does not have an abortion problem. Abortion is already difficult to obtain in 90% of the United States and for most women, it is a last resort that comes with complex emotional and moral dilemmas. The Supreme Court has ruled that it is legal and continued efforts to limit its access without understanding what leads women to seek abortions and how to prevent pregnancies in the first place is not helpful. The real problem is America has an access to birth control, personal responsibility, and education problem.

I know it’s a touchy subject, and some of you might have differing views than I do. I respect your opinion. Let me share with you why I believe access to birth control will lower abortion rates in America.

First, most women do not view abortions as a form of birth control. Not only are they fairly expensive—even on a sliding fee scale—but they leave a woman with lasting doubt. Some people believe a woman should have to go before a judge or “abortion panel” to end a pregnancy. I believe it is unfair to judge each woman on a case-by-case basis and a woman shouldn’t have to discuss her rape or her contraception failure to someone who knows nothing about her circumstances, such as a judge or panel. In my opinion, the best option is to keep the relationship between a woman and her doctor. Can you imagine if we made men who wanted a prescription for erectile dysfunction appear before a judge or “ED panel”? Men would go ballistic. Every male Member of Congress who has sexual performance issues would fight this tooth and nail, and yet, this is what some of those very Members want

women to have to go through. This is not fair.

What we know about abortion is that some 60% of women having abortions are in their 20s; 86% were unmarried; 75% were economically disadvantaged; and 62% reported a religious affiliation. This means the majority of women who sought abortion services identified themselves as religious, single, and three-quarters are economically challenged to carry a child to term. The answer is to help women get in a position, through education and low cost prescriptions, where they don't have to worry about becoming pregnant in the first place.

[Allow me to sidetrack into the religious views on abortion and birth control. Thank goodness I don't employ "political handlers" or polls to tell me what to say or you'd never be given the opportunity to read this.

I have a dear friend who is very religious, would never consider abortion as an alternative to birth, who has a severely handicapped son and another with no handicap. She is against abortion at all costs. She is also against the government providing birth control in any form, believing her faith does not allow for the use of birth control. That is fine. It is what she and millions of other people believe. On the other side, I have friends who are staunchly pro-choice and who believe abortion must be kept legal under all circumstances and access to birth control should be considered a fundamental right and benefit of all health insurance policies. That is also what millions of people believe.

My religious and spiritual beliefs are near and dear to me. I don't discuss them openly. I don't proselytize. If I can help someone, I do. If I can change a life, I will, but I don't feel it is my calling to push my religious beliefs on another person. Instead, I look at facts and try to unearth the root cause of a problem.

If my wife became pregnant, we'd view it as a blessing; but we're also in a position where we can afford to have a baby and raise him or her to age 18. If my wife's health was in jeopardy due to a pregnancy, we'd hope that an operation to save her life would be available to her. I believe 90% of men who truly love their wife would say the same thing.

When it comes to the Bible (and I will refer to Christianity as it is the most popular form of religion in America) the Bible does not condemn birth control. It doesn't. I even checked with the Vatican to see if this was correct. They agreed with what I am about to share. Two passages in the Bible are sometimes interpreted as being opposed to birth control. First, after the creation, God said to the man and woman, "Be fruitful and multiply." Some people interpret that as meaning that intentionally preventing pregnancy

would be wrong. But in its original context, this verse was part of a passage telling how God has given mankind stewardship over the world, and it was not a statement about birth control:

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (NAS, Genesis 1:28)

The second passage has to do with the Old Testament law of levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). If a man died childless, his brother or nearest relative was expected to marry his widow and father a child to carry on the deceased's name and inherit his property. Onan refused to fulfill that duty and used a birth control method known as coitus interruptus to prevent pregnancy:

Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother." But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also. (NIV, Genesis 38:8-10)

Most experts say Onan was condemned for using his brother's widow for sexual pleasure while refusing to provide offspring for him, and that no general criticism of birth control was intended.

The Bible gives clear, direct guidance on many topics of morality, but not on birth control. Thus, any inferences from the Bible are opinions and not Biblical evidence.]

With that said, our society faces great challenges and unexpected pregnancies, mostly due to not understanding when and how pregnancy occurs or not being able to afford birth control, is a topic that only takes common sense to fix. It is less expensive for taxpayers to provide birth control than to have a woman, especially one on social assistance, become pregnant.

If you've read my positions, you already know that I try to find the root cause of issues. Abortion is no different. We have to look at the path backwards from the act of abortion. That means unprotected sex or contraception that failed. Unprotected sex may occur with a partner, husband, or in the case of rape or incest, a stranger or relative. Further back the path is "how" did the pregnancy occur? In the majority of cases, contraceptive use is the key predictor of whether a woman will seek to have an abortion. Women who were not using contraceptives accounted for the majority of abortions.

Many of these women did not think they would get pregnant or had concerns about contraceptive methods. (As an aside, in 2014, I was shocked when a group of female employees, all in their 20s, were in our company's cafeteria talking about the pregnancy of a co-worker. There were nine women there, all born in America except one, and 8 of them believed you could have unprotected sex most of the month without risk of pregnancy or if a man "pulled out" they would not get pregnant. Hearing this, I went to our health insurance administrator and suggested we offer a course on pregnancy and birth control to help employees understand that their beliefs about how to one could become pregnant were incorrect.)

A minority of abortions occur among the much larger group of women who were using contraceptives in the month they became pregnant. Many women who fall into this category have reported difficulty using contraceptives consistently, usually having to do with condom use, which as we know involves the male partner and, let's face it, many men refuse to use condoms.

Wanting to understand this—to get to the root cause—I conducted a survey of 312 women as to why they don't use or desire to use birth control. The top 5 answers were:

1. "I don't want to get fat."

Weight gain was, once upon a time, a concern for women on the pill. But this side effect is characteristic of earlier versions of oral contraceptives. Today, weight gain is no longer a legitimate side effect for pills that contain progesterone and estrogen, though rumor seems to still perpetuate this idea and especially across lower income females.

2. "I might suffer depression."

Birth control interferes with hormones—that's what it's meant to do, as it uses estrogen, progesterone, (or a combination of the two) to suppress the ovaries from ovulating. For women taking birth control, the risk for developing depression increases by 10%, so, yes, this is a genuine concern for women.

3. "It causes cancer."

It's true taking oral contraceptive pills raises a woman's risk for developing certain kinds of cancer, like breast cancer. By the same token, it's also true that the pill lowers a person's risk for developing other kinds of cancer, like ovarian and uterine.

4. "I'm not at risk for getting pregnant."

One study showed that 36% of women who experience unplanned pregnancies cite their reason for not using birth control as "thinking they couldn't get pregnant," an excuse that proper, informative sex education could clear up. Another reason was "infrequent intercourse" as a justification.

Again, informative education could help clarify the risks of pregnancy.

5. (Tie) "I don't want to put chemicals in my body."

Amy, 32, said, "I want a 100% healthy and unaffected reproductive system for when I am ready to have children." Unfortunately, there is a huge misconception among women that taking birth control pills will have a long-term negative effect on their bodies. The fact is, birth control works on a daily basis; it doesn't build up in your body over time. As soon as a woman ceases taking birth control, hormones leave the system and a woman is susceptible to pregnancy.

5. (Tie) "Cost"

I was surprised that cost ranked 5th in the survey and was not higher on the list. The people who stated cost is an issue were predominantly African American or Hispanic and in lower income groups. Of teens who took the survey, 61% said cost and access was the reason they did not use birth control (another 29% believed they couldn't get pregnant if the man pulled out before ejaculation). You can see why parents are failing their children and why it is time for our action on this issue. Unprotected sex isn't just about getting pregnant, it's also about stopping the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Education is needed and it appears parents are not doing a good job of informing their children of the risks of pregnancy.

Thirty-eight percent of all women of reproductive age are not currently using a contraceptive method, largely due to the reasons listed above. The good news is numbers 1, 3, 4, and 5 are all able to be improved upon through better education. Cost and access, tied for #5 on our list, is also addressable, especially for lower income women. For instance, we could expand welfare, WIC, and other social programs to provide vouchers for birth control. We could investigate allowing pharmacies to prescribe birth control, much like we allow them to offer flu shots, eliminating the expense of doctor's appointments which costs on average \$79. Some people may scream that "this is just more big government" but I argue it is the opposite.

Providing birth control pills for a 28 year old mother who collects welfare is cheaper than paying for healthcare through a pregnancy, the actual birth, and support of yet another child on welfare.

Many on the "Far Right" believe that birth control should not be offered to women. But being too frugal by opting for a "free" but relatively ineffective method, such as fertility awareness or withdrawal, can easily lead to accidental pregnancy. A couple using no birth control has an 85% chance of becoming pregnant in one year, and yet, many

simply don't understand the likelihood of pregnancy.

Birth control is surprising affordable. The cost of the birth control pill, birth control patch, and vaginal ring runs \$15-\$50 a month. I would estimate the US Government could purchase a month's supply for under \$25 including distribution to the woman. Over the course of a year, this amounts to about \$300.

IUDs last up to 12 years and are 99 percent effective. While the upfront cost is a \$500 to \$1,000, the fact that it lasts so long means that the average annual cost is actually cheaper than condoms.

The Depo-Provera injection occurs every 3 months and is also about 99 percent effective, according to the FDA. Each shot costs between \$35 and \$75, and sometimes comes with an additional doctor's visit fee of \$20 to \$40. That equals between \$220 and \$460 a year.

For low income men and women who opt for sterilization: vasectomies for men and tubal ligation for women, this permanent birth control method makes sense for people who don't wish to have children in the future and don't want to take a pill or use other forms of contraceptives. For both men and women, it is 99 percent effective. Vasectomies cost between \$350 to \$1,000 and sterilization for women costs between \$1,500 and \$6,000. But since it's permanent, the cost per year over the long-term is lower. For example, if a 30-year-old woman gets sterilized, it prevents her from getting pregnant for the rest of her fertile years. Spreading the cost of a \$3,000 procedure over 20 years brings the annual expense down to \$150. Similarly, if her partner gets a \$600 vasectomy, the annual cost averages out to \$30 over 20 years.

Early and continuous prenatal care is essential both before and throughout a pregnancy to help ensure a safe delivery and healthy baby. The average cost of prenatal care is about \$2,000.

- Prenatal vitamins cost about \$15 per month.
- A crib is easily \$200. Diapers are \$40 for a box of 250. A monitor can add \$25-\$50. A changing table and pad \$125, car seat \$125, plus clothing and food and future medical costs.
- The cost of delivery is typically \$9,600 to \$15,000.
- Once born, the necessities for a baby equal \$450 - \$800 a month (source: WebMD)

All of the birth control methods listed here are cheaper than the cost of carrying a baby to birth which is estimated to average between \$12,000 and \$18,000. They are certainly cheaper than raising a child to age 18. According to a report from the Department of Agriculture, the cost of raising a

child born in 2015 to age 18 is \$233,610.

This begs the question of why so many elected officials—*mostly men*—want to prevent government spending on birth control, at \$300 a year for prevention, as a means to prevent unwanted births (\$12-\$18,000) and abortions. From a financial standpoint to our country, providing birth control for free, at cost, or even reduced retail rates, is much better than not. As the Republicans continually try to defund federal payments to Planned Parenthood because of the organization's pro-abortion focus, one option which I want to address with them is turning that money over to contraceptive access. The amount they want to take away from PP could provide 1.6 million women with birth control free of charge or 3.2 million women if the government picked up half the cost of birth control.

In the twentieth century, scientific knowledge of reproduction, sensitivity to women's rights, and concern about overpopulation produced great changes in attitude. Most churches now say reproductive decisions are private matters between husband and wife and their consciences. Birth control methods are no longer discouraged.

The fact remains: If you want to slow the rate of abortion, make birth control affordable and available to those most at risk of pregnancy.

In America, the Supreme Court is the final arbiter of law. Forty-five years ago abortion was made an individual right by the Supreme Court. Today it is one of the most carefully cultivated institutions in America, while still being offensive to many: even though 50% of the population defines themselves as pro-choice, 44% still consider themselves pro-life. It is protected by courts, subsidized by legislatures, performed in hospitals and clinics, and even promoted as a "fundamental right" by our State Department. Generation that grew up since 1973 hold the expectation that legal abortion will be available for them if they want it.

Today, many well-known civic groups, from the League of Women Voters to the American Civil Liberties Union, are committed to its protection and subsidization. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education now requires that abortion techniques be taught in all obstetrics-and-gynecology residency training programs.

Part of the challenge in coming to common ground on the abortion issue is that the Left doesn't like to use the term abortion. They will call it a "reproductive health procedure" or a "termination of pregnancy." Abortion clinics are "reproductive health clinics" (more recently, "women's clinics"), and the right to obtain an abortion is "reproductive freedom." Sometimes the word abortion is unavoidable, as in media

accounts of the abortion controversy, but then it is almost invariably preceded by a line of nicer-sounding words: “the right of a women to choose” abortion.

The Clinton Administration was the first Administration openly committed to abortion. Even they didn’t want to mention the word abortion. President Clinton’s 1993 health-care bill would have nationalized the funding of abortion, forcing everyone to buy a “standard package” that included it. Yet nowhere in the bill’s 1,342 pages was the word abortion ever used.

Meanwhile the Right is more than willing to use the term, mostly focusing on the negative connotation and brutal nature of abortions with terms like “death by abortion” and “aborting the fetus” or “aborting the baby”.

Why can’t we have civil discussions on abortion, using the term abortion? I believe this is because the majority of both pro-choice and pro-life people sense that there is something not quite right about the procedure. How could there not be? Abortion is troubling because it is a killing process. Abortion clinics may indeed be places of care for women, as Planned Parenthood maintains, but their primary purpose is to end a pregnancy, which is interpreted by most people as to kill human fetuses. And for those who have seen videos of abortion, the understanding that it ends the viability of a pregnancy is brought to chilling light.

Where we have gotten derailed as a nation is the idea that we cannot address the core issues that lead to abortion as a means to slow down the frequency of the procedure. That is where access to affordable birth control comes in and that is why I believe it must be addressed. It is why I believe the Republican Party must switch course and focus on providing at-risk women with the tools to prevent abortion, which means preventing pregnancy. It is why i believe the Democrat Party must push for more access to low cost birth control. And this is why I believe there is hope to get passage of laws improving access and cost, because both sides want a solution.

What’s happening in Nevada?

88% of Nevada counties had no clinics that provide abortions and roughly 9% of Nevada women live in those counties.

On a positive note, abortions have declined in Nevada over the past few years. There was a 22% decline in the abortion rate in Nevada between 2010 and 2014 and today Nevada represents just 1.2% of all abortions in the United States. Whether you are pro-life or pro choice, this is a trend on which we all can agree positive in nature.

This is likely due in part to expanded access to long-lasting contraception methods that are now covered by health insur-

ers under the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion and other initiatives. Another reason could be attributed to birth rates which have declined since 1960 to the lowest point in recorded history in 2017. The general fertility rate is 62.0 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44 with this trend being driven by a decline in birthrates for teens and 20-somethings, many of whom no longer engage in intercourse.

How do we drive abortion rates even lower? We must work to make birth control more affordable, increase funding for sex education, and very likely, push sex education into schools as parents have not been doing a good job of explaining pregnancy risk.

Though the teen birth rate has declined to its lowest levels since data collection began, the United States still has the highest teen birth rate in the industrialized world. Roughly one in four girls will become pregnant at least once by their 20th birthday. Teenage mothers are less likely to finish high school and are more likely than their peers to live in poverty, depend on public assistance, and be in poor health. Their children are more likely to suffer health and cognitive disadvantages, come in contact with the child welfare and correctional systems, live in poverty, drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves.

Creating channels where young women can gain access to affordable birth control is a better use of spending than having teens give birth.

What about education?

Education plays an important role in decreasing unwanted pregnancies. Currently, less than half the states require the teaching of sex education in high school and only 21 of these mandate sex education and HIV education. This is largely because the majority of parents, mostly in Midwestern and Southern states, believe forcing sex education in schools runs counter to parental rights. As much as I believe we have to better educate our teenagers, let me assure you, there is no way I would remove a parent’s right to opt out of this curriculum if they prefer to teach this topic at home.

For those parents who may be ill-informed, uncomfortable, or desirous of a third-party to present sex education, there is a role that the US Congress can play. Congress can provide funding for the National Institutes of Health and leading sex education and medical professionals to create courses and then have an independent medical board review curriculum for accuracy and mandating that curriculum be based on information from published authorities upon which medical professionals rely. As part of this, sections dealing with pregnancy, its risks and its consequences, could be offered separately so that parents who want to opt-out of sex education

for their children could allow access to pregnancy-focused content. Likewise, with a federally funded course, it could be distributed via the Internet and made available for parents to use at home. This entire program could be completed for under \$500,000 and made available online to every clinic, every school, every family in America.

8. High-quality and affordable child care. Most families need childcare at some point. As more and more families consist of two wage earners, access to affordable and high quality childcare has not kept pace. Childcare is expensive and licensed center-based care is unaffordable for families of poor to modest means. There is broad public support for more government spending on childcare as long as that spending does not result in another unfunded entitlement that worsens the deficit.

Claims that more spending on childcare will pay back the taxpayer in the long run based on better child development or increased workplace productivity are logical.

I believe we can provide a substantial subsidy for every child from birth to fifth birthday in a family at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which would positively impact nearly half the families in the US.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concludes that affordable childcare should not exceed 7% of family income. There is only one state, Louisiana, in which the cost of center-based infant care for one child meets that definition for a married couple with the median income for the state. In other words, childcare of the type and in the settings that experts favor for child development is simply unaffordable for the vast majority of working families.

What are the consequences of this issue? Among them lost productivity for employers due to parents missing work to handle gaps in childcare or to care for a sick child; lost wages and reduced retirement benefits for parents who have to drop out of the labor market to provide at-home care for their young children; a substantial downward pressure on the wages of childcare workers with effects on the quality and stability of the childcare workforce; and lost opportunities for further education, college savings, and other investments that working parents could make in themselves and their children but cannot afford because they are spending most or all of their disposable income on housing, health insurance, and childcare.

I have been formulating a solution to this problem and it may—let me reiterate that—it may—be possible to fund affordable childcare programs across America by making one adjustment to the charitable deduction program in the US tax code. Don't worry; I'm not suggesting we end the tax

deductibility of your charitable donations.

Let's start with some background on the charitable deduction and how it works. The charitable deduction falls into a category of revenue losses, so-called tax expenditures, attributable “to provisions of the Federal tax laws which allow a special exclusion, exemption, or deduction from gross income or which provide a special credit, a preferential rate of tax, or a deferral of tax liability.”

Specifically, the charitable deduction allows individual taxpayers and corporations to deduct from their taxable income in a given year the present value of contributions they make to nonprofit groups that are religious, charitable, educational, scientific, or literary in purpose, or that work to prevent cruelty to children or animals. Examples of organizations that qualify as recipients of contributions for the purpose of a tax deduction include non-profit educational institutions such as Harvard University, think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Brookings Institution, hospitals such as St. Jude's, philanthropies such as the Gates Foundation, and arts organizations such as Amati Foundation, which I founded in 2000.

Charitable deductions favor high wage earners. The charitable deduction is only available to individuals who itemize their deductions, which is about 30 percent of American taxpayers. Thus 70 percent of taxpayers, i.e., those who take the standard deduction, don't take advantage of the tax benefits of charitable giving.

I am investigating whether requiring taxes be paid by the organization receiving the donation would fund many of the programs we'd like to see offered, and if so, could those funds pay for the creation of affordable child care programs? At first glance, I believe they can. There will definitely be push back against such a proposal and most of the negative response will come from people who don't run nonprofits or understand the ease in which a nonprofit can adapt to a 10% tax, so we'll have to educate those impacted. I can speak from my experience and say the nonprofit organizations I have been active in or supported financially could pay 10% tax on their income and still provide the level of support—in most cases—that they do now.

As noted earlier, increased childhood subsidies would cost just under \$45 billion and would provide a substantial subsidy for every child from birth to fifth birthday in a family at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This is nearly half the families in the United States.

Current federal spending on childcare and early childhood programs amounts to about \$26 billion a year, so \$19 billion more would be required. Total giving to charitable organiza-

tions was \$390.05 billion in 2016. If we taxed these organizations just 10%, it would generate \$39 billion which would provide full funding for childcare and early development programs, with a \$20 billion balance which could be put into a federally supported training program to train childcare workers, provide low interest loans to childcare centers for construction of physical facilities, and leave hundreds of millions of dollars available for the development of training programs, STD classes, pregnancy education, and other educational supplements that could be created and distributed nationwide.

What will this do to the charitable organizations? Not much. Most organizations will begin planning to account for the 10% tax and within a couple years should be able to fully absorb the cost of this program.

You'd still be able to give to your church or animal charity and receive a tax deduction. What changes is the charity would be taxed. For instance, in the case of the charity I started, if we receive \$1,000,000 in donations, our donors would still be able to take a tax deduction, but the charity itself would plan for the need to pay taxes on donations. If phased in over 3 years, charities and other non-profits will have plenty of time to adapt their programs to accommodate this tax. And, since these funds would be earmarked for childcare programs and early education programs like Head Start, there shouldn't be anyone who runs a charitable organization complaining about having to give back a little to support America's children and their families.

9. Get more women involved in STEM. STEM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines—science, technology, engineering and mathematics—in an interdisciplinary and applied approach. Rather than teach the four disciplines as separate subjects, STEM integrates them into a cohesive learning paradigm based on real-world applications.

Though the United States has historically been a leader in these fields, fewer students have been focusing on these topics recently, a dangerous trend for our future competitiveness. According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 16% of high school students are interested in a STEM career and have proven a proficiency in mathematics. If elected, I will find out if the Obama 2009 “Educate to Innovate” campaign to motivate and inspire students to excel in STEM subjects has worked and if so, how can we expand it to bring more young men and women—but especially women—into the program.

It is estimated the US needs 8.65 million workers in STEM-related jobs in 2018. The manufacturing sector faces an alarmingly large shortage of employees with the necessary

skills—nearly 600,000. The field of cloud computing has created over 2 million STEM-related jobs with no slowdown in sight. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by the end of this year, the bulk of STEM careers will be:

- Computing – 71 percent
- Traditional Engineering – 16 percent
- Physical sciences – 7 percent
- Life sciences – 4 percent
- Mathematics – 2 percent

Many STEM jobs do not require higher education or even a college degree. Less than half of entry-level STEM jobs require a bachelor's degree or higher. However, a four-year degree is incredibly helpful with salary—the average advertised starting salary for entry-level STEM jobs with a bachelor's requirement was 26 percent higher than jobs in the non-STEM fields. For every job posting for a bachelor's degree recipient in a non-STEM field, there were 2.5 entry-level job postings for a bachelor's degree recipient in a STEM field.

Not unexpectedly, Asian students have historically displayed the highest level of interest in the STEM fields. Prior to 2001, students of an African-American background also showed high levels of interest in STEM fields, second only to the Asian demographic. However, since then, African-American interest in STEM has dropped dramatically to lower than any other ethnicity. Other ethnicities with high STEM interest include Native American students.

As a way to provide women with a career path that will be in demand for the foreseeable future, encouraging and rewarding young women to enter STEM fields of study is a fantastic goal.

Middle-school girls outperform boys at STEM: A 2016 study of 21,500 eighth graders found that 45% of the girls were proficient at using their skills to solve real-world technology and engineering scenarios, compared with 42% of the boys. By the time they're teenagers, however, a small share of girls plan to pursue a career in STEM: Just 11% of teenage girls said they expect to go into STEM, according to a survey published earlier this year by Junior Achievement, a youth-focused nonprofit, and consulting firm EY. That's compared with 36% of teenage boys.

Why? Women's' hesitancy to get into these jobs may be due in part to the images of scientists they're exposed to early on in television and other media. Have you noticed that shows which children watch often depict characters that like science or math as social outcasts? They do! This perpetuates the idea that being interested in STEM makes you a nerd, which may be holding girls back from pursuing STEM studies.

It's also rare to see a female scientist on television. A 2012 report from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media found that just 21% of female characters on prime-time television have STEM careers compared with 79% of male characters. With that kind of influence, is it any wonder girls don't envision themselves working in STEM fields?

The share of women holding bachelor's degrees in computer science and working in those fields is dropping at a scary rate. In 2004, 25% of bachelor's degree holders in computer science were women. 10 years later that number dropped 7 percentage points to just 18%. As computing and engineering have become more elite and male dominated, women may have become more marginalized. It may have occurred unconsciously, but as these fields have become more prestigious and more elite, there's been a move—most often found in tech companies like Google, Facebook and others—to leave women out of it. We are going to turn this around.

During my career, I have been fortunate to have talented and strong leaders of all types within my companies. I've worked with many incredibly smart and talented female computer programmers and project managers over the years and one thing I've learned is that diversity is an advantage in STEM-related fields because two biologically different viewpoints are brought forth. When done correctly, diversity pushes companies to find, train, and support people who have talent, regardless of gender. If we apply this thinking to programs to make young women enthusiastic about STEM, we can, maybe not in this generation, but certainly down the road, bring millions of women into traditionally male-dominated roles that will have a positive impact on the future of our country, planet, communities and families.

10. Work toward realistic solutions to the rising costs of health insurance and prescription medications. As outlined in “12 Big Ideas for Nevada” the out of control costs of health insurance and prescription medications is a huge deterrent to women getting early and preventive medical attention. If we focus on ways to identify ailments early, we can address illnesses quicker and prevent many long-term complications. This will also lower the cost of healthcare in the United States; a benefit for all Americans.

I'll include this in #10, although it could stand alone. Like most people, I cheered when President Trump publicly stated his intent to **give patients with terminal illnesses a right to try unproven experimental treatments**. I was appalled when the House of Representatives recently voted on the measure and it failed because 140 Members of Congress, mostly Democrats, voted against passage and the measure failed. Those against giving you and your doctor the right to try experimental treatments said the bill gave false hope to

patients and could endanger people dying of incurable diseases. What? You have an incurable disease and you are facing death and 140 people decided you could risk your health by trying an alternative treatment. Uhm, what part of “incurable disease” do these folks not understand? You are facing a death sentence so looking at any and all alternatives should be your right.

If you elect me to be your voice in Congress, I will work to pass legislation to allow people with incurable diseases access to try other forms of treatment, including new, not fully vetted by the FDA treatments, cannabinoid protocols, oxygen and vitamin therapies, and other treatments as a last line of defense in your battle.

. . .

A personal note to women reading this page: Why do I, a 53 year old man, believe I can be effective in pushing these ideas through the male-dominated House of Representatives? Because, sadly, data suggests men listen to men more than they listen to women. I was recently told about a company called Gong Research Lab that has been analyzing anonymized conversations with artificial intelligence to determine if men speak and listen differently to other men or women. It found that when women pushed an agenda to a man, she spoke about 48% of the time, meaning the listening phase was about even, too. When men pushed an agenda to another man, the listening phase jumped up and the pitch men spoke 28% less than the other way around. (I want to be transparent here. As I wrote this last section I thought it sounded odd because after all the things I want to work toward on behalf of women. I felt like I was saying that men can sell better than women, they can explain something better or they can comprehend faster. I don't mean to sound that way. I am pointing out data and statistical analysis that suggests men listen to men better than they listen to women. Perhaps a man in Congress, focused on women's issues, can work with other women and like-minded men to get the not so “woke” men to listen to what should be done to support women across career, family, security, and health issues.



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What else can we do to improve the lives of women? Email me at Bill@TownsendForNevada.com

To learn more about Bill Townsend's policies and our “12 Big Ideas for Nevada, please visit www.TownsendForNevada.com