**Rosh Hashanah Resource  
Sermons, Torah Talks, Panel Events, and Conversation!**

Rosh Hashanah — beginning on the evening of October 2, 2016 — is the perfect time to discuss with friends and family the devastating impact of the Hyde Amendment on individuals and communities across the country. We invite clergy and members of the Jewish community to use this resource for Rosh Hashanah sermons, *Divrei Torah* (talks about the Torah portion), or holiday meal discussions. Elevating this issue during the High Holiday period can inspire us to ensure every woman’s right and ability to make her own decisions about her body without political interference or economic coercion.

**Jewish Values**

* **Justice: *tzedek, tzedek tirdof***

As Jews, we are taught *tzedek tzedek tirdof,* justice, justice you shall pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20). We must not stand idly by while barriers to health care place our neighbors’ moral autonomy, health, economic security, or well-being at risk. We must heed this call especially for the most marginalized who face structural obstacles to exercising their human rights, women who are low-income; women of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people; immigrant women; and young people; among others.

* **Respect and Dignity for all Human Beings: *Kavod Ha Bri’ot***

As each of us is made in the image of God — *b’tselem elohim* (Genesis 1:26) — every single person’s health is paramount and unassailable; we have an obligation to care for and to protect our bodies and our health, and ensure our neighbors can do the same. This means that every person, regardless of income, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, ability or other factors, deserves fair treatment and access to the resources they need to make their own decisions about their body, family, and future without political interference or economic coercion.

* **Education and Awareness: *Talmud Torah***

As Jews we are obligated to inform ourselves and to educate others about the issues that help us to “love our neighbor as ourselves,” because understanding leads us to action.

**Rosh Hashanah**

* Tashlikh — the Jewish ritual of casting bread crumbs into a flowing water source on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah — is a time to cast off our sins and begin anew. It’s time to stop perpetuating policies that harm and shame women, and instead respect a woman’s moral agency in the new year.
* It’s been 40 years since the Hyde Amendment was passed. Just as the Jewish people wandered the desert for 40 years before arriving in the land of Canaan, women in the United States have now worked for 40 years to lift bans that deny abortion coverage to low income women. We don’t need to wait for divine intervention to “arrive” in a new, just world. In the new year, may we work together to get rid of the Hyde Amendment once and for all.

**Religious Liberty**

When politicians deny access to abortion, they not only interfere in a woman’s personal decisions, they deny her **moral autonomy** and **religious liberty.** They deny a woman the ability to follow her *own* faith, her own values, and her own religious beliefs when making this most holy of decision of when and whether to become a parent.

**The Hyde Amendment & Abortion Access**

* The Hyde Amendment and Hyde-like bans withhold coverage of abortion from individuals enrolled in most federal health plans and programs, including individuals enrolled in Medicaid, federal workers, residents of the District of Columbia, servicewomen, Peace Corps volunteers, and Native American women.
* The Hyde Amendment forces one in fourpoor women to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term, placing a women at greater risk of poverty.
* When abortion is pushed out of reach, some women may resort to ending a pregnancy using methods that are dangerous, ineffective, or life threatening.
* More than 85% of US counties have no abortion provider.

**EACH Woman Act Facts**

* The Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH Woman) Act, HR 2972, introduced by Representatives Barbara Lee (CA), Diana DeGette (CO), and Jan Schakowsky (IL) in July 2015, would end federal bans on abortion coverage and bar local, state, and federal political interference in the decisions of private health insurers to offer abortion coverage.
* Under the joint federal-state Medicaid program, states may use state funds to cover abortion for Medicaid enrollees. But only 17 states require such Medicaid coverage (AK, AZ, CA, CT, HI, IL, MD, MA, MN, MT, NJ, NM, NY, OR,VT, WA, and WV). The bill would ensure fair treatment across the US, guaranteeing women comprehensive coverage, no matter where they live.
* The EACH Woman Act would guarantee fair treatment in access to abortion for every individual, regardless of their income or type of insurance. People with fewer resources should not have inferior access to care than people with more money.

**Whole Woman’s Health vs. Hellerstedt**

* On June 27, 2016 the US Supreme Court struck down two of Texas’ most onerous anti-abortion restrictions in its ruling in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*. This was a major victory for reproductive rights, health, and justice.
* The restrictions in question were Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws. These laws place onerous, unnecessary restrictions on clinics, such as requiring financially unfeasible renovations, forcing clinics to close or stop providing abortion care.
* The Texas TRAP laws challenged in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt* had shuttered over half of the abortion clinics across Texas. If fully implemented, they would have left just 9 or 10 clinics open to serve approximately 5.4 million women across the state of Texas.
* This case illustrated how far politicians have gone to push abortion out of reach — 300 new anti-abortion restrictions have been enacted in the last six years.
* The Women’s Health Protection Act, S 217/HR 448, introduced by Senators Richard Blumenthal (CT) and Tammy Baldwin (WI) and Representatives Judy Chu (CA), Lois Frankel (FL) and Marcia Fudge (OH), would ensure safe, legal abortion remains available no matter where a person lives by banning several forms of state restrictions (like TRAP laws) that shut down clinics and push abortion out of reach.
* Building on the momentum of *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt,* we must tackle one of the harshest remaining barriers to abortion: the 40 year old Hyde Amendment, which politicians use to deny coverage for abortion care to those insured through Medicaid.

**Sources:** *Reproductive Health Technologies Project’s* [*Two Sides of the Same Coin*](http://rhtp.org/abortion/documents/TwoSidesSameCoinReport.pdf)*; Center for Reproductive Rights:* [*Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*](http://www.reproductiverights.org/case/whole-womans-health-v-hellerstedt) *&* [*Act for Women*](http://www.actforwomen.org/)