

October 18, 2016

Mr. Chris Wallace
Fox News Sunday Anchor
Fox News
400 N Capitol St NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20001-1502

Dear Chris Wallace,

The presidential debates are a critical opportunity to hold candidates accountable on issues that directly impact the daily lives of Americans. In the past few weeks, we have heard Donald Trump bragging about sexually assaulting women—and nearly a dozen women have come forward to share their stories about his unwanted sexual advances. It has become clear that we must demand answers from our candidates on the issue of women and our bodily autonomy. In other words, we must demand answers about whether our candidates believe women are equal to men in the eyes of the law.

For that reason, we request that you ask the candidates about how they plan to address the crisis of abortion access in our country. This crisis leaves women across the nation without full control over their own bodies and their own lives. It threatens our health and our economic security.

Safe, legal, and accessible abortion is foundational to a woman's ability to determine her own destiny. It is an issue close to the lives of Americans male and female, young and old, single and married, childless or parents. The most recent data show that one in three women will choose abortion by age 45, and the majority who make that decision will be mothers who are trying to take care of the families they already have. Despite the fact that seven in 10 Americans support legal abortion, politicians at every level of government are actively trying—and in many cases succeeding—in blocking access to what is at the end of the day a constitutionally protected right.

Abortion is not a “niche” issue. Asking about abortion means demanding that the candidates tell us what they think about gender equality and a woman's right to determine what happens to her own body. It means moving a complex discussion past the simple “pro-choice” and “pro-life” labels so they can talk about their ideas for supporting women and families. It means determining whether a candidate thinks a woman deserves full access to the American values of freedom, equality, and opportunity.

This conversation would give voters the chance to compare the two worldviews represented by the presidential candidates: one that believes women should be equal to men in all things, and one that would punish women and control our bodies for ideological reasons.

In past debates, moderators have typically posed questions on abortion that skirt the lived reality of countless women and instead focus on outlier cases that border on the entirely theoretical. We hope that your questions capture the true needs of women.

Below are questions we propose you ask:

1. Among all of the barriers to accessing abortion care for American women, financial burdens rank highest. This is because the Hyde Amendment prevents low-income women from using public health insurance to access this medical service, and clinic closure laws have been so detrimental that it now requires considerable financial means to take time off work, find childcare and travel long distances to access abortion care. As president, how would you ensure that the constitutional right to abortion is guaranteed to all Americans, regardless of their financial situation?

2. The Zika virus is a threat faced by countless Americans, particularly in Florida, where you two are currently fairing evenly. Polls have shown that 6-in-10 voters believe a woman should be able to access abortion if she is infected with Zika. If elected president, would you allow a woman infected with Zika to access all available healthcare options, including abortion, or would you restrict that access?

3. In Texas, where women's health clinics have closed because of laws that put restrictions on their operations, maternal mortality has doubled. As president, what steps would you take to reverse maternal mortality in this country?

Few issues are more personal and consequential than the issue of being able to choose whether, when, and with whom to start or grow a family. This issue is too important to leave unaddressed on Wednesday. We hope you'll allow the candidates to talk about their differing plans to defend and expand our constitutionally protected right to access abortion.

Sincerely,

Ilyse Hogue

NARAL Pro-Choice America, President

Stephanie Schriock

EMILY's List, President

Cecile Richards

Planned Parenthood Action Fund, President

Heidi Hess

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