

THE PLAIN DEALER

Ohio rated last in reproductive rights

November 15, 2006

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A post-election review of legislative actions by women's health advocates ranks Ohio and Kentucky last among states in reproductive-health rights.

The legislative review, which was conducted by the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force** and two women's health groups, found that Ohio's laws stifle women's access to birth control pills, other forms of contraception and safe abortions. The review of legislative actions in all 50 states also criticized Ohio's emphasis on abstinence-until-marriage education, weak hate-crime law, constitutional ban on gay marriage and sale of "Choose Life" state license plates. Proceeds of the plates go to nonprofit groups that promote adoption but are also prohibited from mentioning abortion as an option.

New Mexico topped the review, which ranked states using indicators that spanned several types of state measures: public funding for abortion and family-planning clinics, health-care providers' ability to deny medical services because of their religious beliefs, the ability of same-sex couples to adopt, abstinence-only curricula in schools and lack of anti-discrimination clauses that specifically protect gays.

An earlier survey released in the spring also ranked Ohio last, along with South Dakota for its introduction of a bill banning all abortions. The bill failed, and South Dakota moved up one notch, said Kirsten Sherk of IPAS, an international group that supports sexual rights for women.

IPAS and Sister Song: Women of Color Reproductive Health Coalition were also sponsors of the review released Monday.

To view the map of the state-by-state review, log on to www.mappingourrights.org.