

Inside the Search for Common Ground on Abortion Reduction

James Salt | Jun. 4, 2009 NCR Today

Wendy Wright of the organization ?Concerned Women for America? recently [wrote in Human Events](#)[1] about a meeting she attended at the White House on May 15. The Obama Administration has convened a series of meetings to bring together those who disagree over the contentious issue of abortion in an effort to find common ground. I was at the same meeting Wright attended? but left with a completely different impression. In fact Wendy Wright?s depiction of the meeting is just plain wrong.

It was a landmark meeting - not only because of its unique purpose and goals, but also because of the diversity of the political views represented in the room. No other Administration has attempted to bring together individuals with opposing views. Reproductive rights advocates sat together with pro-life forces; abstinence-only advocates were at the same table with supporters of comprehensive sex education. Obama officials asked those present to discuss our best ideas on how to support pregnant women, strengthen adoptions and reduce the number of women seeking an abortion. They took notes as we gave our responses.

Towards the end of the meeting, after all of us present had a chance to share our views and hear from President Obama?s domestic policy team, Melody Barnes asked for feedback from those who had not yet spoken. Melody directly and politely asked for Wendy Wright to share her views. Despite Wendy Wright?s claims, there was nothing ?testy? about Melody?s tone or their interaction.

In her account of the meeting, Wright makes a claim that Melody said, ?It is not our goal to reduce the number of abortions.? Let me be clear: Melody Barnes said no such thing. Wright either heard her incorrectly or she is just making this up.

Instead of pushing the White House to advance policy that supports pregnant women, instead of bringing good ideas to the table that would reduce abortion like many other conservatives, she?s attempting to poison the well and get journalists to bite on her claim that the difference between ?need for abortions? and ?number of abortions? is so critical that it?s a barrier to finding common ground.

That?s the basest sort of politics. What?s worse, it doesn?t serve the pro-life cause. Instead of bringing the White House examples of programs that work ? like pregnancy counseling centers, adoption programs, and homes for pregnant women ? Wright?s contribution to this dialogue is a dishonest editorial posted on a right-wing website.

As the President stated in his speech at Notre Dame, he is calling on Americans to reduce the number of women seeking abortions. As a Catholic dedicated to real solutions to this issue, I believe that it is essential to match rhetoric with actions and work to alleviate the pressures that lead women to seek an abortion. The President has ordered his staff to come up with a set of proposals that would do just that. In her long diatribe, Wendy did not find room to discuss any of the ideas that the Administration is considering that would reduce the number of abortions. Instead, she decided to parse words and make accusations

I hope journalists don?t fall for this ruse from a far-right advocate with a cynical agenda. What?s more, I hope

that pro-life Americans don't either. Wendy Wright clearly values tactics over results, but pregnant women in America ? women who need greater support from government at all levels ? simply can't afford to do the same.

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[1] <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=31970>