

Media Help Flailing Liberals Spread Message on Abortion, Gay Rights

By [Erin Brown](#) | October 29, 2010 | 13:51



It's no secret that the nation is preparing for a GOP tidal wave with significant conservative victories in the Senate and House next Tuesday. The election has essentially focused on domestic economic policy. Conservative candidates have been [gaining ground](#) with a popular job growth/lower taxes/revive the economy mantra.

But desperate liberal Democrats have suddenly shifted the focus from the economy to divisive social issues like abortion and gay rights, and the mainstream media have been more than willing to give them a platform. Media personalities like Matt Lauer, Rachel Maddow and Eleanor Clift are loudly voicing concerns over the future of gay marriage and the legal status of abortion.

[video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEE6lwS9Bp4>]

To turn the tide in their favor, liberal candidates are attempting to gin up the independent and women's voter base by focusing the rhetoric on their opponent's position on abortion and gay rights. Just as desperate, some in the media are scrambling to paint conservative social views as "out of the mainstream."

Lefty Women Concerned Over Pro-Life Female Candidates

The editor-in-chief of RH Reality Check, a leftwing reproductive health Web site dedicated to pushing the liberal social agenda, certainly has [a strong opinion](#) about the pro-life female candidates running for office next Tuesday. "Now with painful Senate and House losses on the horizon, some Democrats have suddenly found their voice on choice, so to speak," wrote Jodi Jacobson "... In short, Republicans and their first cousins in the Tea Party have an increasingly radical agenda on social issues—only one example being support for laws that would convey the full rights of "personhood" on fertilized eggs (thereby outlawing not only abortion but also contraception and in-vitro fertilization)." These sentiments are shared by none other than MSNBC host Rachel Maddow and lefty reporter Eleanor Clift.

In perhaps the most far-reaching, ridiculous example of the mainstream media vilifying the socially conservative candidates, NBC's Matt Lauer and MSNBC's Rachel Maddow

mutually agreed that the violence of anti-abortion extremists is a valid concern if pro-life candidates win next Tuesday.

On October 25, Maddow interviewed with Lauer on NBC's "Today" Show and expressed her deep concern over the "extreme" positions held by anti-abortion Senate candidates. Lauer asked Maddow about the MSNBC documentary on the murder of late term abortion provider Dr. George Tiller, which Maddow narrated. "The documentary really looks at how the murder happened, what we know about why it happened, and I think its important that its airing right now because there are, there are five Senate candidates running right now of a position on abortion that has never really been seen in mainstream politics before," Maddow said. "They want it criminalized, including people who become pregnant because of rape or incest."

Before Maddow could finish, Lauer interjected with a statement attempting to connect the so-called "anti-abortion extremists" and the pro-life Senate candidates running for office. "So what you're asking, 'Is this an isolated murder or is this part of a larger campaign'?" Lauer probed.

"Well if the far edge of the pro-life movement is getting mainstreamed by candidates that adopt, high level candidates adopting their position, what do we need to know about the far edge of the anti-abortion movement?" Maddow responded.

Newsweek columnist Eleanor Clift [was similarly worried](#). "But it's more than a numbers game that worries the traditional pro-choice women's groups that have been at the forefront of the battle to increase the representation of women in Congress," she wrote. "It's the potential impact on policy and hard-won legislative battles where they fear there will be damage. 'Women members are more likely to understand the importance and relevance of the women's health agenda, and having fewer of them would have an impact,' says Democratic pollster Geoff Garin."

To help stoke the fire of fear, Clift quoted a Planned Parenthood official. "What exactly a less-female, more-conservative Congress might do turns out to be quite extensive from a policy perspective," Clift wrote. "Laurie Rubiner, Planned Parenthood's vice president for public policy, has compiled a long list where a Republican-led Congress can erode hard-won gains. At the top is Title X of the Health and Human Services budget, the only federally funded program that provides family-planning counseling and access to contraception in the country. After being flatlined for eight years during the Bush administration, it got a \$10 million increase last year. 'We can definitely see a Republican Congress not providing any increase or cutting the program,' Rubiner said. 'That's the one we worry about a lot'."

Joe Miller – Senate, Alaska

Tea Party favorite Republican Senate Alaska candidate Joe Miller had an interview with MSNBC's Rachel Maddow last week that focused almost exclusively on Miller's position on homosexuality. The Huffington Post boasted the headline, "Joe Miller's

Extreme Views on Gay Rights.” Miller, who [according to Rasmussen](#) is in a dead heat with opponent Lisa Murkowski, has made fiscal responsibility and the repeal of Obamacare central themes of his campaign. The [Huffington Post itself](#) noted that “Miller has generally avoided talking about LGBT issues.” Ironic.

[The Miami Herald](#) reprinted a piece by Erika Bolstad of the Anchorage Daily News that highlighted the abortion issue’s recent emergence in the Alaska Senate race. “In an election year in which the economy and federal spending have eclipsed the debate over social issues in much of the country, abortion has emerged as a divisive factor in Alaska’s U.S. Senate race,” Bolstad wrote. “It’s an issue that perfectly defines all three, with Republican Joe Miller the anti-abortion candidate, Democrat Scott McAdams the pro-choice one and Sen. Lisa Murkowski straddling the middle.”

Ken Buck – Senate, Colorado

Fiscal conservative Republican Colorado senate candidate Ken Buck didn’t fare much better when it came to avoiding the abortion issue. Buck, who [holds a very small lead](#) over opponent Michael Bennett, has resonated with Colorado voters with his message of cutting spending. But as of this past week, Buck’s position on abortion has come into question and the media are more than willing to cover the “controversy.”

On October 22, The Huffington Post highlighted a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee ad attacking Buck for a rape case he refused to prosecute years ago in which the ad states, “Ken Buck wants to make abortion illegal, even in the most dire circumstances... Ken Buck refused to prosecute a rape case, even though the attacker confessed. The Victim says Buck blamed her.”

The Washington Times this week has [noticed the shift in rhetoric](#) in the Buck/Bennet Colorado Senate race. “The pivotal Senate race in Colorado is locked in a dead heat as Republican Ken Buck struggles to keep the message on taxes and spending, while Democrat Michael Bennet pounds his opponent on social issues,” wrote Valerie Richardson. “Democrats, in an effort to woo suburban female voters, have ramped up attacks on Mr. Buck’s anti-abortion stance, a rape case he declined to prosecute as Weld County District Attorney, and his remarks that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice... The Democratic strategy has shifted the focus of the campaign away from economic issues, where Mr. Buck and Republicans have enjoyed success in hammering the Democrats on the stimulus bills, health care reform and the trillions of dollars being added to the national debt.”

Carly Fiorina – Senate, California

Carly Fiorina, the Republican Senate candidate for California, hoping to unseat incumbent Democrat Barbara Boxer, has run on a message of [“job creation and economic growth.”](#) But thanks to publications like The Sacramento Bee, Fiorina’s socially conservative views (and not her domestic policy positions) are now front and center.

[“Fiorina takes a risk and stays to the right”](#) was the headline for Dan Morain’s article and if that’s not enough to tip off the reader to Morain’s leanings, the first few sentences are sure to demonstrate his leftist position. “[Fiorina](#) publicly says she’d vote to overturn [Roe v. Wade](#) if given the opportunity, this in a state where an anti-[abortion rights](#) candidate at the top of the ticket has not won since the 1980s,” Morain wrote. “For good measure, she proudly supports the [Second Amendment](#), opposes same-sex marriage and looks to the free market libertarian [Cato Institute](#) for counsel on the economy.”

In an interview with Fiorina, NPR [tried to immediately jump](#) to Fiorina’s stance on social issues, and ignore her successful economic message. On October 22, “All Things Considered” host Melissa Block’s second question zeroed in on abortion.

BLOCK: What about swing voters, though, who are concerned not just with jobs, as you mentioned, but with social issues? And let’s take one: the issue of abortion. You have said you would support overturning Roe vs. Wade if the opportunity arose, which is out of step with the views of about seven out of 10 Californians who favor abortion rights.

Ms. FIORINA: Well, I certainly understand and respect that not everyone shares my views. And I also believe that Barbara Boxer is irresponsible when she throws around baseless accusations that I want to criminalize abortion. Nothing could be further from the truth. People will disagree on the social issues. That’s why I think they should be decided at a state level.

On the other hand, people agree that there are other issues that also matter. California has a 12.4 percent unemployment rate. And our debt levels are skyrocketing. Seventy-eight percent of Californians believe our nation is headed in the wrong direction.

Culture and Media Institute Intern Krista West contributed to the research for this piece.