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Walgreens Amends Pharmacist Refusal Clause Policy in Response to Planned Minnesota NOW Protest

July 27, 2005 - Walgreens has amended its corporate pharmacist refusal clause policy in response to pressure and a series of planned protests from the Minnesota chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Walgreens' pharmacist refusal clause states that pharmacists can refuse to fill a prescription based on their 'moral and religious' beliefs. If this occurs, the customer is then referred to another pharmacist in the store or to the nearest Walgreens to get her prescription filled. Walgreens' amended policy, though upholding the rights of pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions, states that if a woman can't or does not want to travel to a willing pharmacy to fill her prescription, the Walgreens' managers will "arrange for a prescription to be delivered to a customer or on many occasions deliver it themselves."

Because the prescriptions most affected by this policy are birth control and emergency contraceptives, MN NOW objected to Walgreens' pharmacist refusal clause, citing that it placed undue burden on a woman to find a willing pharmacist to fill her prescription. Many women cannot travel to another pharmacy due to mobility, economic or time issues, or they live in rural areas where they do not have another Walgreens nearby. NOW believes that this delay and stress in getting a prescription filled infringes upon women's reproductive rights.

NOW applauds Walgreens' amended policy and for them taking responsibility to ensure the women receive their prescriptions in a timely manner.

Walgreens is one of the fastest growing chain pharmacies in the United States. With almost 5,000 stores nationwide, it serves 4 million customers and fills 443 million prescriptions yearly.

NOW is the largest organization of women's rights organization in the United States. Founded in 1966, NOW's goal has been to take action to bring about equality for all women by working to eliminate discrimination and harassment; secure reproductive rights; end all forms of violence against women; eradicate racism, sexism and homophobia; and promote equality and justice in our society.