The debate over contraception coverage has emerged as one of the major social issues in the 2012 presidential campaign, with Republicans and Democrats using the topic to energize their voting bases.

**Keywords**

Birth Control, Contraception, Women, Health, Reproduction, Abortion, Funding, Programs, Policy, Social, Issues, Politics, Protests, Rick Santorum, Candidate, Campaign, Nancy Pelosi, Sandra Fluke, Georgetown University, GOP, Republican, Party, Decision, 2012, Presidential, Election

**Citation**

MLA

Transcript

Birth Control a Major Issue in 2012 Election

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:

The price of gas isn't the only contentious campaign issue tonight. Birth control seems to have become, as one headline writer put it today, the third rail of American politics right now. And this happened really out of nowhere. In fact, it was a question about birth control that got the biggest audience response at last night's GOP debate in Arizona. NBC's Kelly O'Donnell has more on the politics of birth control and women's health.

KELLY O'DONNELL, reporting:

Protests today in Richmond, Virginia.

Group of People: Our bodies! Our lives!

O'DONNELL: A flash point in the political fight over government's place in women's health and reproduction. So provocative the mere mention of birth control prompted boos...

Former Senator RICK SANTORUM (file) I don't support that.

O'DONNELL: ...at the Republican debate.

Sen. SANTORUM (file): Just because I'm talking about it doesn't mean I want a government program to fix it.

O'DONNELL: And rare applause at a Democrats-only staged hearing today set off by the outraged Democrats vented when Republicans called only men to testify last week on religious institutions and birth control.

Representative NANCY PELOSI (Democrat, House Minority Leader): We've heard from over 300,000 people saying we want women's voices to be heard.

O'DONNELL: Democrats invited one woman, a Georgetown law student, to talk about hardships for some women who don't have insurance that covers birth control.

SARAH FLUKE (Georgetown Law Student): Without her taking the birth control, a massive cyst the size of tennis ball had grown on her ovary.
O'DONNELL: Nearly 11 million women use birth control pills, the most common method of contraception. The political fire is broader, with some states looking to restrict abortion and funding for women's health programs. In Virginia late today, after protests and a national spotlight, legislators changed a controversial bill that would have required an invasive procedure before a woman could have an abortion. Some Republican voters want this debate.

Unidentified Woman #1: Social issues should play a very high priority in the campaign.

O'DONNELL: Analysts say these social issues are more likely to help Democrats.

JENNIFER DUFFY (The Cook Political Report): This issue has given Democrats at every level an issue to talk to women voters about and particularly independent women.

O'DONNELL: Making women without party ties the most sought after voters this year. Kelly O'Donnell, NBC News, Washington.