

# Nomination divisive, not unifying

The United States Senate must reject George W. Bush's nomination of former Sen. John Ashcroft as United States attorney general.

Bush's only mandate is to govern strictly from the center. Nominating Ashcroft belies Bush's claim that he's a "uniter, not a divider" and calls into question Bush's sincerity to heal the divisions in America and change the tone in Washington.

Ashcroft's position on abortion is extreme. He supports a ban on all abortions, including for rape and incest, and a ban on most birth-control methods, including the birth-control pill, morning-after pill and IUD, because his religious tenets say they cause an abortion. The medical community disagrees.

These extreme positions aren't grounded in medical fact but in a religious tenet that is known for its desire to control the participation of women in the world outside of motherhood. It's a religious position on abortion and birth control that politically powerful religious fundamentalist groups headed by Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Gary Bauer, Janet Parshal, James Dobson and others have insisted on inappropriately interjecting into the political arena, blatantly crossing the line of separation of church and state. These extreme positions are wrong and immoral and must disqualify Ashcroft to be U.S. Attorney General.

Our deeply held concern about these extreme positions on abortion and birth control are grounded in graphic stories and pictures



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Soapbox**

will seek abortions to end their unintended pregnancies.

This nomination is a political payback to these fundamental Christian groups who reluctantly, but not without a quid pro quo arrangement, kept silent so that candidate Bush could stake a "legitimate" claim to being a centrist, a strategy critical to winning the presidency. These groups expected that quid pro quo to be honored by Bush immediately upon being handed the presidency by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Ashcroft's nomination reveals a very troubling lack of respect by Bush for a voter mandate to govern strictly from the middle, a very frightening lack of respect for the principle of separation of church and state, and it displays an unapologetic willingness to play political bait-and-switch with the American voters to appease the politically powerful Christian right.

Life and Liberty for Women and

from the past that remind us that illegal abortion endangers the health of, and kills, women.

Without the availability of all the birth control methods technology has provided us with today, more women, particularly younger women,

its constituency are both frightened and incensed by such political games where women's private and personal reproductive health care issues are concerned.

We aren't fooled for one minute by this incestuous and clandestine relationship between Bush and the anti-abortion religious right. It's a signal that Bush and Ashcroft understand that there's enforcement of the law and then there's "enforcement" of the law.

Intellectually honest individuals know this nomination is divisive and they know Ashcroft cannot be trusted to enforce laws provided to protect the nation's abortion clinics and providers when his nomination is offered as a political payback to anti-abortion religious extremists. That's not the way paybacks work, especially in Washington, especially in politics.

Intellectually honest individuals know this nomination violates the letter of and the spirit of, middle-of-the-road governing, which the voters mandated Bush to do.

Every senator who doesn't vigorously oppose Ashcroft's nomination becomes an accomplice to division rather than a facilitator of unity. The United States Senate must step in and enforce the voter's mandate to govern from the middle and stop this incestuous relationship between the religious fundamental extremists and Bush by rejecting the nomination of Ashcroft to be attorney general of the United States of America.

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