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## New laws improve access to birth control

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By [Brette Sember](#)

If you've ever tried to fill a prescription for birth control yourself, you know exactly how frustrating, inconvenient, and ridiculous it can be. Yearly doctor appointments, prescriptions, insurance company runaround, pharmacy hours, pharmacists, co-pays, deductibles, and more stand in your way. It's notoriously annoying, so much so that observers like Amy Schumer have felt compelled to comment on it:



However, there's good news—women in California and Oregon no longer have to play this game to get contraception, including oral birth control pills, as well as patches, shots, and [rings](#).

### Change in laws authorize pharmacists to prescribe

Both California and Oregon have [new laws](#) that allow women to obtain birth control through a pharmacist at their local drugstores. While the drugs and devices aren't quite available over the counter, the laws allow pharmacists to "prescribe" them so that they continue to be covered by health insurance. (If they were truly available OTC, they would not be covered by health insurance and women would have to pay the full cost out of pocket.)

### Two states lead the charge

The [Oregon law](#) went into effect on January 1, 2016. For a pharmacist to be able to prescribe contraception in the state, he or she must receive state [board accreditation](#) by taking a training course specifically about prescribing contraceptives. The woman seeking contraception must complete a questionnaire for the pharmacist every 12 months, and if she is under age 18 she has to get her first prescription from a doctor.

The [California law](#) is set to go into effect March 1, 2016. In this state, women must complete a questionnaire for the pharmacist about their cigarette usage, breast cancer history, and pregnancies. The pharmacist can [decline to prescribe](#) if he or she has moral or religious objections. There is no [age restriction](#) in California, meaning teens can get birth control without a visit to the doctor.

### Studies support the move

The new laws are applauded by [medical professionals](#) as an important step for women's health and lifestyle. Reuters [reports](#) that 30 percent of women who don't use birth control or use less effective birth control (like condoms) would take birth control pills if they could get them without a prescription from a doctor. Another study has shown that women are more likely to stay on birth control if it is easily available at the drugstore without a doctor's visit.

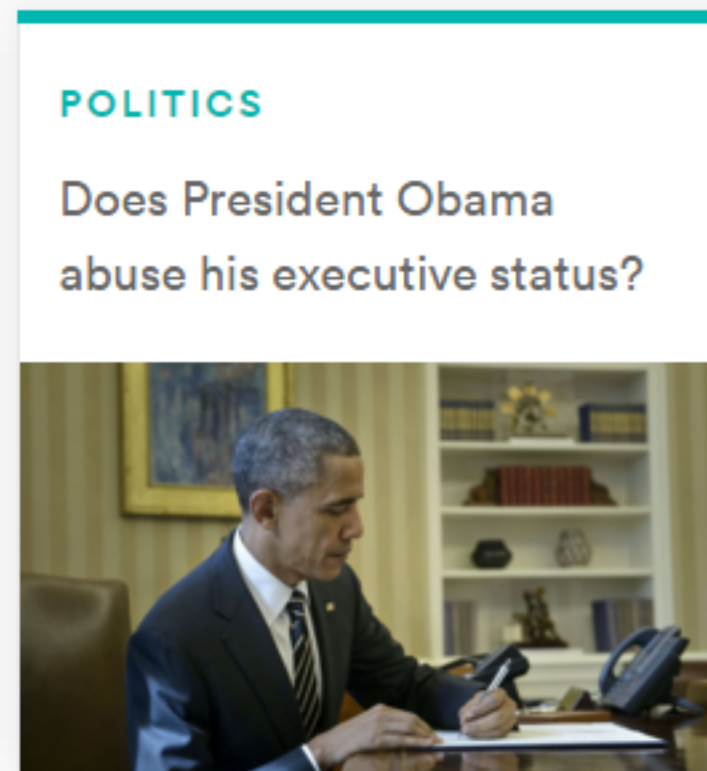
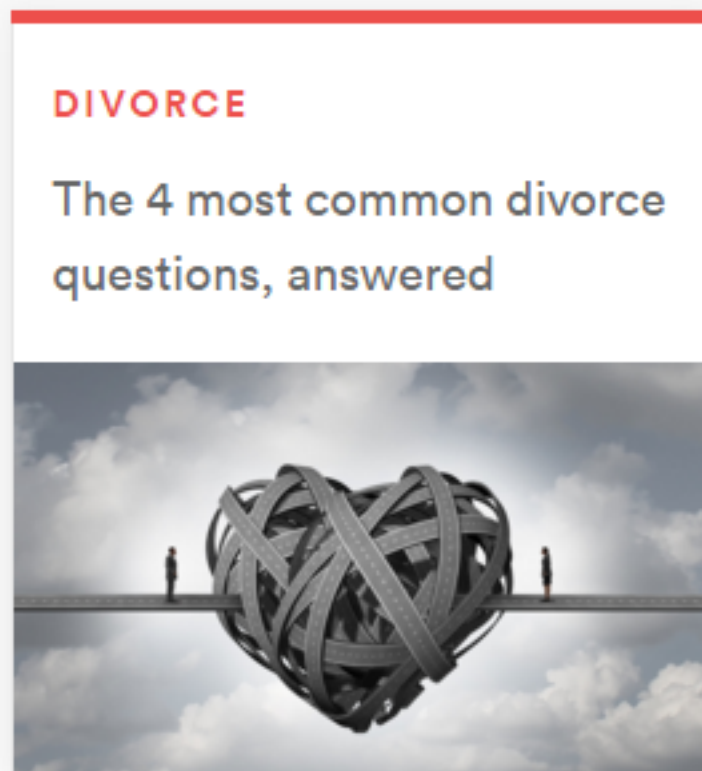
Moreover, in other states, where initiatives have made birth control free for low-income teens, the number of unplanned pregnancies has declined, thereby saving Medicaid money. And long-term studies have shown that increased availability of the pill helps close the wage gap and makes women more likely to find work and earn degrees.

More than anything, these laws just make life easier for women. If the policy is considered a success in California and Oregon, perhaps more states will jump on the bandwagon.

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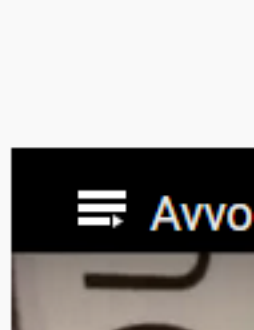
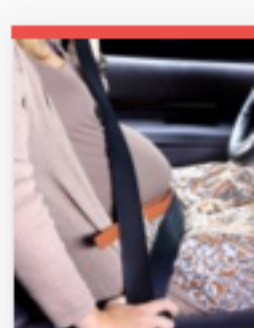
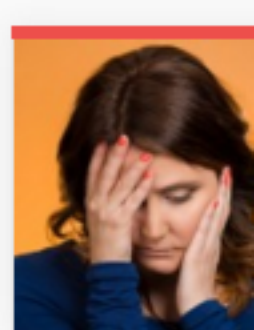
[Brette Sember](#) is a former attorney and author of more than 40 books, including *The Divorce Organizer & Planner*, *The Complete Divorce*, *How to Parent with Your Ex*, *The Essential Supervisor's Handbook*, *The Complete Credit Repair Kit*, *The Original Muffin Tin Cookbook*, and *The Gluten-Free Guide to Travel*. She writes often about law, parenting, food, travel, health, and more. She blogs at [PuttingItAllOnTheTable.com](#).

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