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**VON ESCHENBACH FAILS TO BOOST CONFIDENCE IN FDA DURING SENATE HEARING**  
***Under Backdrop of a Surprise FDA Letter, Health Advocates Take “Wait and See” Approach***

***Statement by Belle Taylor-McGhee, Executive Director, Pharmacy Access Partnership***

**Oakland, CA** – Today’s Senate confirmation hearing of Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach’s nomination as FDA commissioner did little to instill confidence that the FDA would work to protect women’s health by making Plan B emergency contraception (EC) available without a prescription. In fact, with regard to the FDA’s surprise announcement that it will meet soon with Barr Pharmaceuticals to discuss the over-the-counter (OTC) status of Plan B, Dr. von Eschenbach openly admitted that the move was strategically timed to defuse the Plan B issue so as to not impact his confirmation hearings.

The confirmation hearing brought to light more than three years of protracted delay from the FDA to grant non-prescription status to Plan B. The FDA’s recent move also highlights the request for dual status, in which Plan B would remain prescription-only for women under 18 years of age. This is not good news for younger women, who would still need a prescription to obtain this safe and effective back-up birth control method. The FDA continues to ignore volumes of scientific data and research that conclude that Plan B is safe for all women and access to it warrants no age restriction.

While Plan B remains a prescription-only product across the United States, pharmacy access to EC—which allows women to obtain EC through a pharmacist-initiated prescription without needing to visit a doctor or clinic first—remains an important clinical service in the prevention of unintended pregnancy. Even if the FDA makes Plan B available OTC for some women, pharmacy access to EC will continue to be especially crucial for younger women, undocumented women, or women without proper identification trying to prevent pregnancy within the short window of time in which EC is effective. To date, nine states (*WA, CA, NM, AK, HI, ME, NH, MA, VT*) allow pharmacy access to EC, whereby women can obtain EC directly from a pharmacist and do not need an advance prescription from a doctor or clinic.

The FDA’s latest maneuver more than highlights the need to create sound public policy to meet women’s basic reproductive health needs. Women need Plan B approved without delay, without unnecessary restrictions and without political motivation.

*Pharmacy Access Partnership was established in 1999 as a center of the independent, nonprofit Public Health Institute. Its purpose is to expand consumer access to contraceptive commodities and reproductive health services in pharmacies, and to give pharmacies a stronger role in promoting community health. For more information, please visit [www.PharmacyAccess.org](http://www.PharmacyAccess.org) or [www.Go2EC.org](http://www.Go2EC.org).*