

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Habitat for Humanity

Once a year, Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties sends a tithe to Habitat International, which is based on the revenue from our ReStore. A tithe supplemental country is then selected by our affiliate's Board of Directors. For Fiscal Year 2022, Habitat Haiti was selected as our placement for the annual tithe.

In August of 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck southwest Haiti, damaging or destroying 135,000 homes. Habitat Haiti had built more than 300 homes in the same region five years earlier, in the wake of Hurricane Matthew, and 98% of the Habitat houses built previously were deemed habitable and suffered minimal damage. Most homes in Southwest Haiti lack structural reinforcement and quality building materials that enable homes to withstand natural disasters. During the Fiscal Year 2022, 26 new homes (average cost \$12,700) were constructed. Over 2,500 shelter kits, produced by ShelterBox, were distributed to the half a million citizens who were displaced from this earthquake.

In recent years, Haiti has endured extreme political unrest. Since the overturn in government in last year, basic infrastructure has crumbled, and cholera outbreak has been rampant. Currently, Haiti's capitol Port-Au-Prince is 75% controlled by local gangs, which now control the main fuel terminal, soaring gas prices to \$25-\$30 a gallon. Violence, murder, and widespread kidnapping have become daily in an island of 11 million people.

I reached out to Anna Oltmann, the Resource Development and Communication Manager of Habitat for Humanity International Haiti. She states, "We are continuing to build homes and support families affected by last year's earthquake, although it is taking longer and we do have to take breaks when there are fuel shortages or security challenges. Yes, the security situation and gang activity within the country continues to be a huge problem. We monitor the situation daily and make recommendations. Some of our implemented security measures include, restricting staff travel when necessary, utilizing helicopters to travel out of Port-au-Prince instead of traveling by road, and modifying the manner in which we purchase and store construction materials to reduce risks. It's definitely a daily struggle for our staff, and I really admire

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Habitat Happenings
Executive Director
Charlotte Randall



True Light

We who never suffered blindness take sunsets, children's faces, and everyday tasks for granted. Imagine living in darkness, then having the surgical bandages removed.

William, a Liberian man, is a husband and father of four. He suffered blindness for three years and was unable to provide for his family. When he heard of a Samaritan's Purse surgical team in Monrovia, "I was filled with hope for the future," he said. The procedure worked. "I can read again!" he exclaimed. "I can begin to fish again and send my daughters to school." With bandages off, he had new life.

Stories and metaphors of seeing and light are a well-trodden path to discerning the things of God. Centuries before Christ the prophet wrote, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light" (Isa. 9:2). Darkness yet looms because evil persists in our world. But we have hope! History confirms the prophet's words. "The true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:9-10). The Light is the Creator, entering His creation lying in a manger.

The world suffers with (a sometimes willing) blindness. But people, even the physically blind, are enlightened by the truth about Jesus. As that great theologian Hank Williams crooned, "I wandered so aimless, life filled with sin. I wouldn't let my dear Savior in. Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night. Praise the Lord, I saw the light!" The bandages are off!

To believe in the true Light is to reflect it. "Every Christian is part of the dust-laden air which shall radiate the glowing epiphany of God, catch and reflect his golden Light," writes Evelyn Underhill. "Ye are the light of the world - but only because you are enkindled, made radiant by the one Light of the world. And being kindled, we have got to get on with it, be useful." Your light is not meant to be hidden under a bushel, Jesus said. "Let your light shine before men" (Matt. 5:16).

Each Christmas we celebrate the Light that pushes back the darkness. It's our annual reminder that wars, hurricanes, and pandemics do not have the last say. It's your reminder that whatever

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

The sometimes brutal cold temperatures we see in the north Georgia mountains impacts our domesticated animals in different ways. Many factors enter into whether our pets are safe when the temperatures dip into the very low 10 and 20 degrees. This week's questions and answers address some of the issues to consider as we go into these cold winter months.

Q. What is a good temperature to use as a benchmark for pet safety in the winter?

A. A dog's normal body temperature is anywhere from 99.5 to 102.5°F. In general, cold temperatures should not become a problem for most dogs until temperatures fall below 45° F, at which point some cold-averse dogs might begin to feel uncomfortable. When temperatures fall below 32° F, owners of small breed dogs, dogs with thin coats, and/or very young, old or sick dogs should pay close attention to their pet's well-being. Once temperatures drop under 20° F, all owners need to be aware that their dogs could potentially develop cold-associated health problems like hypothermia and frostbite.

Q. What factors should I consider when allowing my pets to go outside in cold weather?

A. Coat type - Dogs with thick, double-layered coats tend to be the most cold-tolerant (think Siberian Huskies, Newfoundlands or Samoyeds). On the other hand, dogs who have exceptionally thin coats (e.g., Greyhounds and Xoloitzcuintli) suffer the most in cold weather. Coat color - On a clear day, black, brown, or other dark-coated dogs can absorb significant amounts of heat from sunlight, keeping them warmer in comparison to their light-colored brethren. Size - Small dogs have a larger surface area to volume ratio. Therefore, small dogs get colder more readily than do large dogs ... all other things being equal. Weight - Body fat is a good insulator. Thinner dogs tend to get colder quicker than do their heavier counterparts. Conditioning - We've all experienced this one. Fifty degrees feels quite chilly in October, but after a long, cold winter, a 50-degree day in April can make us break out the shorts and T-shirts. Dogs who are used to cold temperatures handle them much better than do pets who aren't. Age and Health - The very young, the very old, and the sick are not as able

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Letters to the Editor

Re: "Property Taxes"

Dear Editor,

The recent letter suggesting the elderly should be exempt from school taxes is not practical in a county with such a disproportionately large elderly population. This would shift the tax burden to young families who are already struggling to make ends meet. I realize there are counties in Georgia that exempt the elderly from school taxes, but in those instances the elderly make up a much smaller percentage of the population. It simply would not work here. Younger families would be forced to move elsewhere if they could no longer afford to live in Union County. Employers in this county are already facing labor shortages. This would exacerbate the problem.

I would also remind the writer that Lamar has nothing to do with school taxes.

Finally, I am an elderly (and I do mean elderly) conservative who deplors any and all taxes, but taxes well spent are essential in a civilized and orderly society.

Peter W. White



Chamber of Commerce

I was asked to serve on the Short-Term Rental (STR) Ordinance Committee to establish guidelines to help short-term rentals and residents to co-exist in Union County. The derivation of the committee was to address the health, well-being, and safety of guests/visitors and residents while minimizing the negative secondary effects on surrounding properties. As a member of the committee, I was asked if the Chamber cared about visitors having a place to stay when they came to our area. I think everyone knows that the Chamber loves our visitors. As the Chamber reported in the North Georgia News, based on 2021 estimates provided by the Georgia Department of Economic Development, tourism contributed \$102 million in spending to our local economy while supporting 818 jobs. This is estimated to represent \$18.9 million in wages that hopefully was spent in the County (There were no actual checks presented in the photo's previously posted in the newspaper, the

See *Chamber*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Responding to "Election"

Dear Editor,

If the only way your candidate can be elected is to keep the other side from voting, I submit that you and your candidate are the problem.

Our American system of government depends on citizen participation. Cutting the number of early voting days, outlawing giving voters water in line, limiting the number of drop boxes or increasing the difficulty of absentee voting is wrong and un-American.

If your policies don't pass or your candidates don't get elected, maybe they need to be changed. Keeping others from participating is not the answer.

Respectfully,
Bryan Thomas

Re: "Unfair Government?"

Dear Editor,

In a letter to the editor titled "Unfair Government?" in last week's North Georgia News, the Chair of the Union County Democrat Committee implied that the ruling by the state Supreme Court allowing each county to decide on Saturday early voting was right. Since that is the case, I wish that Democrats would stop complaining that the U. S. Supreme Court ruling that each state should decide abortion issues is wrong.

George Burch

For God So

Dear Editor,

One of the most important verses in the Bible comes from the book of John Chapter 3, Verse 16 -- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What nuggets of knowledge can we glean from this verse? There are two things to note. First, one must be born again. The other is that the Son of Man must be lifted up. They are related. Since Christ has been lifted up, since He bore our penalty, the Spirit of God can regenerate us. And we must be born again; that is the only way God can receive us.

God never saved the world by His love, which is the wrong thinking today. God saves by grace. Eph. 2:8-9 -- "For by grace are we saved through faith, not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast." But God gave us His very best, Jesus Christ, that whoever (you can write your name in here and I can write mine) believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. WOW!!! Folks, this is a personal thing that each one of us have to decide if we believe upon His Name or just walk away with no hope. God created you to

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Letters to the Editor

U.S. Gun Violence

Dear Editor,

I spent the month of April in France. Not once during that month did I hear on the morning news a story about someone being shot. The French love their guns and have one of the highest gun ownership rates in Europe, about 1/6 that of the U.S. They use their guns for hunting. They do not own handguns or semiautomatic weapons. Many people try to blame gun violence on minorities or mental illness. France has a large minority population of Blacks and a large minority population of Muslims. Like in the U.S., many of these minorities live near the poverty level. Due to the poverty, they tend to live in high-crime neighborhoods, but they do not shoot each other. Most countries have about the same rate of mental illness as the U.S.

Now that I am back home, I hear reports of shootings every morning. The United States has a gun violence problem. The cause of the problem is too many guns and too many of the most dangerous kinds of guns. Congress needs to stand up to the gun lobby and those who misinterpret the Second Amendment. They need to pass laws similar to most other developed nations whose citizens do not live with the daily threat of gun violence.

Byron Morris

Misleading Figure

Dear Editor,

As always, leftists are devious. "Dishonesty is their defining characteristic."

The very name "Planned Parenthood" is deceptive as, statistically, the very lowest item on their agenda is actual parenthood.

Claim: "Only 3% of PP services are abortions." (PP's own most recent statistics have upped that figure to "4%.")

However, who'd a thought, that figure is misleading. Oddly, PP counts every service provided separately. A pregnant woman coming in for "services" might be counseled, STD-tested, have an ultrasound, and receive condoms. Those are counted as four services even before aborting her child.

It's fair to say most clients receive some other "service" in addition to an abortion, so this radically inflates their "services" number while reducing the "abortions" percentile.

Clever, no?

Here are some real facts not warmed over with obfuscation:

354,871 - number of PP abortions yearly
96.9% - number of pregnant women serviced by PP who receive abortions
40% of U.S. abortions are done by PP.

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Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years. I can remember getting stockings stuffed with all kinds of goodies. For example, I love tangerines to this day because my grandmother used to give them to me at Christmas. And I remember getting those candied orange slices at Christmas. I also remember getting those soft peppermint sticks at Christmas each year. (Did you know you can still get those candied orange slices and peppermint sticks at Foodland?) I also remember getting those Ice Box Fruit Cakes at Christmas each year. My mother made those things and I would make myself sick eating them. I still have a sweet tooth for those kinds of sweets.

Christmas has always been a special time for my family. My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting. The day after Thanksgiving my grandmother would greet telephone callers with "Christmas Gift" instead of hello. She told me that as a youngster she would go with large groups of people to serenade their neighbors. The group of people would begin the serenade by saying "Christmas Gift," and then the group would sing a Christmas Carol to their neighbor. The neighbors would respond by tossing hard candy to the group after the song.

Just after the turn of the century my Grandfather's family experienced some hard times. My Grandfather was only about 4 years old when his Uncle joined the Army and went to fight in World War I. Then the influenza epidemic came through North Alabama and two of my Grandfather's Aunts died while in their teens. Then Papa's youngest Uncle was accidentally shot while playing with an old pistol. These problems placed a strain on the marriage of my great-great grandparents, John and Martha Cummings. I don't know exactly what happened, but, John left his wife of more than 20 years and ran off with another woman. All of this was bad and created hard feelings. But, after a year or so, Papa's Uncles and Aunts found out their Daddy had run off with his sister's daughter. These two ran off to Missouri and raised another family. The Cummings family in Alabama was extremely bitter.

Some of John's sons never forgave him for the destruction of their family. He came back for a couple of visits, but, a couple of his sons would have nothing to do with him.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Working with Wildlife

Wildlife can be part of what makes living in the mountains so beautiful. When you see deer serenely grazing in a nearby field they look very peaceful. However, if those same deer are eating the plants around your house or garden they can seem like a menace. Let's talk about wildlife and some steps that you can take to protect your property from wildlife.

To start off I want to say that I have success in managing wildlife can take a lot of hard work and perseverance. There is no magic bullet. These are living creatures with a mind of their own. You may end up having to redefine what success is for you. For example, having healthy soil means that you will have more earthworms and grubs in the soil. Those earthworms will attract moles. So sometimes we have to reevaluate what success is going to be realistically.

The best action model to use when trying to manage wildlife is HERL. HERL stands for Habitat modification, Exclusion, Removal or Repellant, and Lethal control. Habitat modification means making your space less attractive to wildlife. This can include things like mowing the grass and removing brush or debris piles. Tall grass and piles give cover to mice and mice are a food source for snakes. Therefore, removing those habitats will make your space less welcoming to snakes. Cutting dead limbs and removing trees eliminates habitat for bats, flying squirrels, and woodpeckers.

The next step is exclusion. Exclusion is using fences or other barriers to keep wildlife out. When using a fence make sure that it works for the specific wildlife that you're trying to exclude. A fence for deer will need to be eight to ten feet tall. A fence for wild hogs may only need to be three to four feet tall, but very sturdy. A fence to keep rabbits out may only need to be two feet high, but should also be buried at least six inches so that they can't dig under it. If you are working with wildlife that burrow the fence will need to be buried to be effective. Around your house make sure that doors, window, pipes, wires, and cables are well sealed to keep wildlife from coming indoors.

Removal involves trapping the animal and moving to another location. The issue with removal is that it only treats the symptom and not the problem. Safety is a concern whenever you are moving a wild animal. Another concern is legality. There are laws regarding the transportation of wildlife. For example, it is illegal to transport wild hogs in Georgia. Repellants are products that you can use to scare or discourage

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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to regulate their body temperatures in comparison to healthy dogs in the prime of their lives, and they therefore need greater protection from the cold.

Q. How can I tell if my pet is too cold?

A. The great rule to follow should always be: When in doubt, keep your dog indoors. The last thing you want to do is put your precious pet in danger of getting frostbite or hypothermia. Depending on the severity, symptoms of hypothermia can include: Weakness, shivering, inaudible heartbeat, and trouble breathing. If your pet experiences any of these symptoms after being out in the cold, it's important that you give your vet a call right away. Keep your pet in a warm area and cover them with warm blankets/towels (avoid using heating pads, as these can burn your pet). Then take your dog to the vet as soon as possible.

Q. Who do we call when we see animals in danger?

A. If you see an animal that you feel is in danger or is sick, you should call Animal Control at 706-439-6052. However, if you simply see a stray animal, there are several rescue groups in Union County. Here are a few: The Mountain Shelter Humane Society (706-781-3843), Castoff Pet Rescue (706 487-4539), Valley River Humane Society (828-837-2304) and the Whiskers Project (888-872-9330). There may be a few more scattered throughout north Georgia.

Animal Control often receives calls about dogs left outside in dog houses during the cold winter months. Please

keep in mind that many households provide heaters and heating blankets in their dog houses. It may appear that an animal is left to the cold elements when in reality, they have access to a warm doghouse.

Q. Should I report any unidentified animal that I find in my yard?

A. Please remember that just because you see an animal running around without a collar, does not mean that they are strays. There are many community dogs and cats as well and there are some that simply roam from their home temporarily and then return home.

Q. How many animals did the Union County Animal Control work with in 2021?

A1. Josh Bridges with the Union County Animal Control reports the following 2021 data: Animal Control calls - 971; Animals adopted out - 71; Animals Euthanized - 16; Animals reclaimed by owner - 27; Bite Cases - 34.

A2. Additionally, the Mountain Shelter Humane Society reports the following 2022 data to date: Animal Intake - 483; Cats - 241; Dogs - 242. Animal Adoptions - 459; Failure to Thrive - 1; Died in Surgery - 1; Medical Euthanasia - 2.

Thank you to Union County Animal Control, Mountain Shelter Humane Society, petmd.com and intermountain-pet.com for contributions to these questions and answers. We are very appreciative of all the animal/pet organizations that help us to keep our pets safe in Union County.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

presentation represented tourism's impact on our community.) Analytics reveal that our tourists come to Union County to enjoy the hiking, biking, and sightseeing that includes our scenic lakes and waterfalls. They enjoy playing golf on our award-winning golf courses without it taking six hours or more to play. Others enjoy being able to leisurely stroll through our shops and stores looking for that one-of-a-kind purchase and having someone actually asking if they can help. And, let's not forget about eating at our restaurants that include just about any cuisine you can imagine.

The committee is working to achieve a balance between health and safety concerns, quality of life issues and rights of property owners on both sides of the issue. We hope that with the great input received from the public hearing the next draft will continue to get us closer to that goal. If we don't address the health and safety, and quality of life issues

as they arise, tourists will not want to come to our area.

While there is currently a moratorium on short-term rentals, property owners that need to receive income from their property have the option to rent out their property long-term (30 days or longer). Workforce housing is a major concern in our community and across the nation. We have had several local businesses forced to close or are operating on a reduced schedule due to lack of workforce. Our manufacturing companies, health care facilities, and schools are also in need of housing for new and existing workers.

Tourists are looking for a relaxing and enjoyable experience which we hope includes supporting our local businesses and respecting our community. We enjoy sharing our community with others, and if we take care of what the Lord has blessed us with, we should be proud of our community for generations to come.

Combs... continued from Page 4A

worship Him in spirit and truth which today is being twisted by the lies of Satan who would love to see millions walk away from the only HOPE of being heaven bound.

The Pharisees believed that the Messiah, when He came, would be a judge according to the Old Testament, which presented this aspect. Like in Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel spoke of Him being as a judge of the whole world. In Psalm 45, it talks about His ruling the world in righteousness, also in Isaiah 11 and 12. God's redemptive purpose embraces the entire world. He did not come to con-

demn or to judge the world, but to save the world from sin. You and I live in a lost world.

Our position is like a man who is in prison being asked whether or not he will accept a pardon. It is not telling the man that he is on trial. He is already condemned, but the Gospel tells him a pardon is offered to him.

The point is, will you accept the pardon? The Gospel is here to save those who are lost without a Savior. What a waste of a life to die and go to hell.

Would have been better if you had never been born.

Frank F. Combs

Williams... continued from Page 4A

wildlife. Snake repellants that work by smell or sound are ineffective because snakes can't hear or smell. These products are only short-term solutions so you will need to reapply them. How effective they are can also be impacted by how hungry the wildlife is. If you are using repellants on your garden

check the label first because some are only intended to be used on plants that you don't eat. Milorganite can be an effective repellant for deer. It's an organic fertilizer.

Lethal control is the last step when managing wildlife. It's best to work with a professional Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator. Make sure that you are aware of the laws regarding lethal control because some wildlife is protected, or lethal control is only allowed in season.

If you have questions about managing wildlife contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UC Historical Society's Brick Walk

The Union County Historical Society is still running a special price of \$50 on Memorial Bricks. These bricks make great gifts to honor someone or a memorial for loved ones.

We also have bell ringings for celebration of special occasions and memorials at cost \$50 each.

For more information contact the Union County Historical Society at 706-745-5493.

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But, time has a way of healing many sore spots. As the years went by John became more and more feeble. He made things right with my great grandfather, Lon, who was always close to his father even though he couldn't understand why John had left his mother. So, one Christmas Lon invited John to come home and spend some time with his family.

Lon invited the whole family for Christmas dinner. Some came and some refused. There was still much bitterness among some of the boys. Lon's oldest daughter, Mabel (Papa's sister), had an idea. She bought her Papa a brand new pair of overalls. She asked everyone to bring a gift for the old man.

Mabel gathered all the gifts and stuffed them into the overalls. Next she sewed the leg openings together so the gifts would not fall out. John was so old he had trouble seeing, but, he knew the overalls were new so he tried to put them on. But, he could not get

his leg into them. So, he turned them upside down and reached his arm into the legs and began pulling out his gifts. Old John soon had about 10 gifts lying at his feet. Papa said he had tears running down his face and he was laughing at the same time. John got more than he bargained for that Christmas. He received the gifts and received the forgiveness of his family.

I think that is why Papa loved Christmas. He was able to experience first-hand the true meaning of Christmas.

Fowler...

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darkness this year has wrought in your life, the true Light appeared in your world to forgive and give life.

That makes Advent a season of hope and anticipation. To celebrate the coming of the Christ Child long ago is to anticipate His return. As surely as the prophet Isaiah got it right, Jesus will fulfill His own promise to return. Until that second Advent, we rejoice because we see eternity just over the horizon.

Look! I see that wondrous glow in the eastern sky even now!

Habitat...

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the way they and our partner families are dealing with the situation both professionally and personally as they ensure the safety of themselves, their families, and loved ones."

By supporting HFH-TUC, you are changing lives within our local community as well as sending support to international relief missions abroad. Please visit www.townunionhabitat.org and subscribe to our newsletter to stay up to date on the latest Habitat happenings.

Your Patriot Reflection



Principle 1-Natural Law

Did you know that our Founding Fathers had 28 guiding principles that they lived by? They believed that every person who desired peace, prosperity and freedom needed to understand and perpetuate these principles. Listen to Principle #1: The only reliable basis for sound government and just human relations is natural law. This sounds good but how did they arrive at this conclusion? Thanks for asking!

The Founders were well educated men who read voraciously over a broad spectrum of authors. One of their favorites was Roman Political Writer Marcus Cicero, and it was he who helped them understand the precepts of Natural Law. The bottom line of his reasoning was this: Natural Law is the understanding that God is the Creator and sustainer and that His Laws are the True Law. Once this is understood it stands to reason that government, justice and human relations laws MUST conform to the laws of the Creator God. Cicero believed that the building of a society on principles of Natural Law was nothing more nor less than recognizing and identifying the rules of "right conduct" with the laws of the Supreme Creator of the universe.

The Founding Fathers envisioned just such a commonwealth of prosperity and justice for themselves and the model society which they hoped to build.

Don't you think the Founding Fathers would be distraught to see how far our country and government has moved, away from the rule of Natural Law? When is enough going to be enough?

A Patriot Reflection is presented weekly by www.joshuaswarriors.org.

Tarter...

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These facts are horrendous in a civilized society and represent not only callous disregard for innocent lives but a countrywide breakdown of personal responsibility in general.

Fun fact - Major League Baseball serves 20 million hotdogs every year. Using Planned Parenthood's math, MLB could claim that their main job is feeding the public because selling hotdogs is 99.9% of what they do every year.

I love stadium hotdogs. Do your own research. Don't be conned by anyone no matter their intent.

My Source for this info is Human Life International. Article by Brian Clowes PhD: <https://www.hli.org/resources/planned-parenthood-abortion-statistics/>

Orémus Y'all,
Murray Tarter