



# Advocacy Update

Sent January 22, 2014

## **41 Years of Roe v. Wade: Where have we come from? Where are we going?**

What the Roe decision changed, why it still matters, and what we can do to make sure the rights it ensures are not stripped away.

*Our tradition teaches that all life is sacred. Although an unborn fetus is precious and to be protected, Judaism views the life and well-being of the mother as paramount, placing a higher value on existing life than on potential life. Women are commanded to care for their own health and well-being. Therefore, there are some instances when Judaism not only condones abortions, but mandates them. To learn more about Jewish values and reproductive rights, [visit this page from the Religious Action Center](#).*

### **Blog Series:**

On the WRJ blog this week we are featuring different aspects of the theme for this year's anniversary commemoration:

- January 21 – Introduction: “ [Where have we come from? Where are we going?](#)”
- January 22 – “[The Importance of Choice: It's Personal](#)”
- January 23 – “Roe at Risk”
- January 24 – “The Contraception Cases at the Supreme Court”

Make sure to check the blog the rest of the week to see the latest in the series.

### **Take Action:**

Join the Religious Action Center in telling your representatives and senators in Congress that you oppose efforts to limit or inhibit the right to an abortion that Roe protects. Each action alert has editable text – make sure you add in why you, as a member of WRJ, urge the member of Congress to vote against the following bills

#### *H.R. 7: The No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act*

H.R. 7 further enshrines the "Hyde Amendment" into law, barring any federal government money from being spent on abortions needed by women who rely on Medicaid, Medicare or the Indian Health Service except in the cases of rape, incest or endangerment to the life of the mother. Despite the health care disparities that the Affordable Care Act seeks to correct, this bill would reinforce an unfortunate reality that a woman's ability to fully access her reproductive rights is dependent on where she falls on the income ladder. Women in the Armed Forces would also continue to be restricted from using their own, self-earned money to pay for abortions on military facilities.

This dangerous bill would prevent women seeking needed reproductive health care from using their own, private money to pay for abortion services. This bill would also deny women the right to deduct abortion services as part of their health care tax credit, infringing not only on federally administered health care plans, but also on privately run and privately paid-for plans.

[Urge your representative to vote against this extreme legislation!](#)

*For more information about WRJ and Social Justice, visit [www.wrj.org/social-justice-home](http://www.wrj.org/social-justice-home)*

WRJ Executive Director Marla J. Feldman and RAC Director and Counsel Rabbi David Saperstein submitted a statement for the record to the House Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice opposing this bill. You can read their statement [here](#).

*H.R. 3601: The Parental Intervention and Notification Act of 201*

This bill would require that all minors obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian before requesting an abortion, followed by a 96-hour waiting period. Not only does this bill contain exceptionally stringent rules for parental notification, it also defines narrow exceptions around this requirement; only in the case of a medical emergency that threatens the life of the mother or in the case of strong evidence of physical abuse of the young woman by the parent can a minor be exempted from the written notification and wait period requirements.

[Let your representative know you oppose this highly restrictive bill!](#)

*S. 1670: The Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act*

If passed, S. 1670 would ban abortions after 20 weeks across the nation. An identical bill was passed in the House of Representatives in late spring 2013. The title of this bill asserts that at this moment in gestation, the fetus can feel pain. Not only is this claim highly contested, and proved incorrect scientifically (read more on this [here](#)), the Supreme Court has ruled that states may regulate abortion after viability, which is determined to be at 24 weeks. Thus, this legislation is not only a severe limit to reproductive rights, it is also likely unconstitutional

S. 1670 has very few exceptions: for the life of the mother and for rape or incest cases when reported to legal authorities – meaning an actual criminal report must be filed before a woman can access abortion services in these situations. This is highly problematic, and a significant impediment for some women who seek an abortion. That provision further restricts the number of women who can have such a procedure after the arbitrarily determined date of 20 weeks. Above all, S. 1670 refuses a woman the ability to make decisions according to her own beliefs and conscience.

[Make your voice heard in Congress: Ask your Senators to vote down S. 1670!](#)

**Resources on Current Topics in Reproductive Rights:**

*The Contraception Cases at the Supreme Court*

These cases ask whether the contraception mandate (that all health insurance plans must include coverage for contraceptive preventive care) under the Affordable Care Act constitutes a substantial burden on religious liberty under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The two cases before the Supreme Court ask whether a corporation has religious exercise rights to oppose some or all kinds of birth control. For more details on these cases, be sure to read the post on WRJ blog on January 24, 2014, or check out the following resources:

- “[It’s About Women’s Health and Rights](#)” from the Center for American Progress.
- For up to date stories on the status of the many cases in the judicial system, visit [this page](#) from Religion Clause, a blog about contemporary questions regarding the separation of church and state.
- SCOTUSblog tracks cases pending before the Supreme Court. For more information about these cases go to: [Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby](#) and [Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Sebelius](#).
- “[Obamacare and Religion and Arguing off the Wall](#)” from Slate.

*Roe at Risk in the States*

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Although advocacy at the federal level is very important, legislation on the state level should not be ignored. It is often in state houses where some of the most restrictive anti-choice bills are passed.

- According to the Guttmacher Institute, 2013 was the most restrictive year for reproductive rights in recent history. Read their report on this [here](#).
- NARAL Pro-Choice America has compiled data on the different state anti-choice laws – visit their resource page [here](#).
- The Supreme Court has refused to hear cases from lower courts that question the constitutionality of laws restricting access to abortion. Most recently, the Court refused to hear a case from Arizona (*Isaacson v. Horne*), in which the federal appeals court ruled that a ban on abortions at 20-weeks is unconstitutional. By declining the case, the decision of the lower court stands, meaning the law will not go into effect for now. Read more [here](#).

The anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision gives us a unique opportunity to take stock of where we are as a nation in terms of reproductive rights, and the ability of all women to access an abortion if they so choose. As the years pass, it is important to remember that reproductive freedoms must be protected for all women – and men – regardless of their socioeconomic status, the state they live in, their religion, their health care plan, or other circumstances that impact their full enjoyment of these crucial rights

If you are interested in reading the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade to better comprehend the legal underpinnings of the legalization of abortion, click [here](#).