

## ROE V. WADE

# Women's Watch: It's time to stop punishing women and girls

Guest Commentary by Becky Saylor

WOMEN'S WATCH

**T**he recent Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade is the first time our Supreme Court has taken a right from U.S. citizens — in this case specifically women and girls. Roe v. Wade established the constitutional right to an abortion.

With this protection removed, states can limit or remove legal abortion access, which is exactly what some government officials in Arizona are trying to do. Even worse, there might not be any exceptions for rape or incest.

According to the World Health Organization lack of access to safe, timely, affordable and respectful abortion care is a critical public health and human rights issue: "Inaccessibility of quality abortion care risks violating a range of human rights of women and girls, including the right to life; the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the right to benefit from scientific progress and its realization; the right to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of children; and the right to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treat-



**Becky Saylor**

ment and punishment."

Restricting abortion rights violates the right to privacy and equality and imposes financial burdens on women and girls. Abortion is health-care and a means of family planning that can impact generations.

According to OH Predictive Insights polling, the majority of Arizona voters want abortion to be legal in some form. In spite of this, the current Arizona Attorney General and other elected officials are trying to restrict abortion in Arizona. Healthcare organizations like Planned Parenthood no longer provide abortions because they don't want to risk imprisonment or other punishment for providing needed services it has been legal to provide for almost 50 years until now.

YWCA says: "We know that abortion bans push young people out of the workplace and limit their educa-

tional opportunities and careers, with lifelong consequences that can and will impact economic stability and opportunity for themselves and their families. For people of color, those consequences are more severe due to existing systemic racial inequities."

Taking the right to abortion away is like forced pregnancy. Allowing no exceptions for rape, incest, fetal abnormalities, or health issues like ectopic pregnancies is cruel. These things are traumatic and difficult enough without victims being forced to continue these pregnancies.

The trauma and violation incest and rape victims endure is devastating, let alone being forced to carry the child of a rapist. Forcing young girls who become pregnant as a result of rape or incest to carry a child impacts their entire life going forward.

They are constantly forced to relive the trauma. It can also lead to severe economic problems. In addition, for young victims, especially girls under 15 years of age, it can lead to multiple physical and psychological issues. At that young age, the pelvis is not fully developed and pregnancy is often painful involving complications, fetal abnormalities, and death.

We must stand up for women's rights and stand in solidarity with those who believe abortion is a fundamental right. Call on Congress to pass legislation to codify protection for abortion and remove unnecessary restrictions.

Support groups like NARAL, YWCA, Planned Parenthood and others working to protect women's right to choose, including abortion.

Lastly, remember, your vote is your voice — use it!!



[Metro Creative]

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becky Saylor is a local women's rights advocate and frequent contributor to Women's Watch.