

Concerned Clergy for CHOICE



A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION FUND OF FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES

JOIN US FOR AN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE CALL:

THE RISK TO *ROE V. WADE*: WHAT NEW YORK CLERGY WILL NEED TO DO

Clergy will play an important role in the lives of women in the event that the United States Supreme Court overturns or curtails *Roe v. Wade* and the protections it contains. As we continue to evaluate the results of the recent presidential election, the risk to *Roe* continues. Call in Wednesday, December 3 at 2 pm to dialogue with NYS reproductive health care advocates and leaders, Katherine Grainger, Vice President for Public Policy and Political Initiatives at NARAL Pro-choice New York; Galen Leigh Sherwin, Director of the Reproductive Rights Project at the New York Civil Liberties Union; and Ronnie Pawelko, General Counsel at Family Planning Advocates of New York State. They will discuss the risks to *Roe* and potential national consequences, the expected impact on New Yorkers and the protections within the Reproductive Health Act now before the State Legislature. The Rev. Karen Senecal, Clergy Project Manager for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and a Concerned Clergy member, will moderate the call.

To sign up, or to learn more, please contact Concerned Clergy for Choice at info@edfundfpa.org. There is no charge to participate. Call in and join the leading edge of reproductive justice.

“Clergy have a special responsibility to bear witness in support of reproductive rights.”

— From the “Statement of Beliefs”
of the Pro-Choice Religious
Network of the Clergy Advisory
Board of the Planned Parenthood
Federation of America

What is *Roe v. Wade*?

The United States Supreme Court 7 to 2 ruling in *Roe v. Wade* established a constitutional protection for a woman’s personal determination regarding her pregnancy. In reaching this decision, the Court relied on decades of rulings that prevent the government from unreasonable interference with personal decisions about procreation, marriage and other private aspects of family life.

Roe established a constitutional protection for a woman. It upheld her prerogative under the United States Constitution to make a private decision about her pregnancy. If *Roe* is overturned, the individual states will regain the authority to allow, restrict or ban abortion.

INSIDE: THE RISK TO *ROE V. WADE*: WHAT NEW YORK CLERGY WILL NEED TO DO

FUNDED BY THE ROBERT STERLING CLARK FOUNDATION

FROM THE DIRECTOR THE NO ROE NATION: WHAT CLERGY WILL NEED TO DO

For those who think that overturning or curtailing the protections established by the United States Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* will end abortion in the USA, we have some news: Abortion will still be legal in many states. Some people discount the threat to *Roe v. Wade* as non-immediate even though the current Court has a demonstrated record of overlooking necessary protection for the health of women. But the story doesn't end there.

With more than one million abortions in the USA annually, the absence of *Roe* will create public health turmoil, especially for a woman in a state restricting or banning abortion. If safe and affordable abortion is locally unavailable, she faces out-of-state travel with all the potential hassles of transportation, extra child care, or lost work time, which, for some women, can prove daunting. Even for a woman with some means, scheduling and coordinating travel would likely delay the procedure, possibly increasing the expense and slightly elevating the medical risk (abortion is much safer to the woman than birthing, with only three-tenths of one percent of woman encountering an abortion-related complication that requires hospitalization). Some women, especially those who lack adequate funds, will be tempted to go underground, to unqualified practitioners in less than hygienic settings. And medical providers and clergy in states that will maintain or strengthen abortion access will be called upon for care by women from restrictive jurisdictions.

Abolishing or limiting *Roe* will not accomplish the abortion-banning goals of its detractors; access to safe and affordable abortion protects a woman's health and well being. Experience shows that when a woman decides her pregnancy is not right for her, she may well seek abortion regardless of the legality or safety. What is more, liberal abortion laws do not cause abortion; abortion is often the result of unplanned pregnancy, lack of access to contraception and an absence of comprehensive sex education. We can all agree that increasing the availability of reproductive health care and education is the best strategy for reducing unplanned pregnancies and abortions.

Clergy want *Roe* in place. Our commitment rises out of pastoral care; women and families come to us in times of need. They share their stories and seek our advice and support. We know that unplanned pregnancy happens under the best and worst of circumstances. And we know that, as a matter of faith and social equity, a woman needs the freedom and support to weigh and exercise her options. And if she decides to terminate, she should receive safe and affordable attention in a proper medical setting. In the event *Roe* is upended or impaired, no doubt clergy will be called upon for assistance and referral; we all need to be prepared, especially in New York, because women from elsewhere will come here.

In New York, pre-*Roe* laws permit abortion, but an extra measure of legal protection is a necessity. The proposed Reproductive Health Act would codify and strengthen access by transferring New York's abortion regulations from the penal code to the health code where they rightfully belong.

Roe has been subject to continuous, well-funded attacks ever since it was decided. To prevent these attacks from succeeding, we can lend our names and voices to the efforts to ensure laws protect women and private family decisions.



Rabbi Dennis S. Ross,
Director

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NO ROE NATION: BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Abortion was so dangerous before Roe v. Wade that 17 percent of pregnancy and childbirth-related deaths were the result of illegal abortions. Today abortion is one of the safest and most commonly performed clinical procedures thanks, in part, to the protections of Roe.

The Rev. Donna Schaper is Senior Minister at Judson Memorial Church, New York City. Her experience counseling women pre-Roe demonstrates the potential threats and needs.

To imagine what life would be like without Roe, look back more than 40 years, even before abortion was legal in most places across the USA.

In 1967, one of my predecessors at Judson Memorial Church, The Rev. Howard Moody, was a founder of the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion (CCSA). CCSA members offered counsel and referral to women in need. Most of the CCSA clergy were men. And sometimes a woman needs a woman to talk to. I happened to be in seminary in Chicago at that time. I was recruited to do this work by then-Chaplain Spencer Parsons of the University of Chicago, and it was my privilege to counsel women several hours weekly. We worked in church basements, where we helped women make moral choices about their lives and their families. We helped them get to New York City, where abortion was legal.

Most of these women were poor, from the South Side of Chicago. We heard stories like, "I've got six children. My husband left me three years ago. I'm working two jobs. I really don't think I can be a good mother to this child." People would cry. People would be afraid. It cost \$300 then. They'd come in with a pile of money and count it out. Sometimes they'd have \$298, and you'd find yourself fishing in your purse, saying, "Here. You don't have to go begging for the money to do this thing that seems to you to be right for your other children and for yourself."

We were arrested twice. We did not do anything illegal. We were sending people to a place where abortion was legal. We wanted to make abortion legal, because we talked to people who had tried abortions – sometimes more than once – through backstreet kind of operations, and they were hurt. They were in physical danger, in trouble still. And so, when they came to us, they were saying, "I don't want to do that again this time." And we helped them get to safe and legal places.

The clinic that provided abortion in New York was run by clergy. And the clergy, especially Howard Moody, were very concerned about how to get the right providers. The clergy were extremely effective though they would probably argue not as effective as they wanted to be in keeping the price low, in keeping women from being ripped off, and to know that abortion can be a safe procedure. I had one myself. It can be done in a simple, caring way, where there are very few aftereffects physically. And what the clergy wanted to do was to make this medical procedure safe and inexpensive, as it should be.



**The Reverend
Donna Schaper**

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THE NO ROE NATION: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

IS IT REALISTIC TO THINK THAT ROE CAN BE OVERTURNED?

The recent Supreme Court ruling in *Gonzales v. Carhart* on the so-called Partial Birth Abortion Ban demonstrates the threat to *Roe*. Until *Gonzales*, a key component of *Roe* placed the woman's health as paramount. With *Gonzales*, the Court retreated from that core principle of *Roe*. *Gonzales* allowed Congress to ban certain medical procedures performed after the first trimester. These very procedures protect the health and safety of the woman according to doctors and major medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. *Gonzales* is the first Court ruling since *Roe* lacking a protection for a woman's health. *Gonzales* demonstrates the risk to *Roe*; this Court will jettison expert medical advice in favor of questionable theo-political abortion ideology.

HOW WOULD ROE BE OVERTURNED?

A Court challenge to *Roe* could happen in any number of ways – over a faith-driven state ballot initiative that unduly establishes fetal personhood, a specious attempt to redefine a contraceptive as abortion, a state mandate that requires a physician read a woman a scientifically inaccurate script or a total abortion ban. Any of these could rise through the courts as an opportunity to dismantle *Roe*.

WOULD ABORTION BECOME ILLEGAL IF ROE IS OVERTURNED?

The absence of *Roe* would not necessarily make abortion illegal. Rather, abortion regulation would return to individual states, just as it was before *Roe*.

With *Roe* gone, laws in:

- 20 states could restrict the legal status of abortion.
- 4 states would automatically ban abortion.
- 13 states would automatically activate unenforced pre-*Roe* abortion bans.
- 7 states would likely restrict legal abortion to the maximum extent permitted by the United States Supreme Court before *Roe*.

For information about a particular state, please visit The Guttmacher Institute's web site for "State Policies in Brief, Abortion Policy in the Absence of *Roe*" at www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_APAR.pdf.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO A WOMAN IN A STATE THAT HAS RESTRICTIONS?

She might well have to travel to another state and possibly incur transportation costs, loss of time from work and child care expenses. She would likely have to delay the procedure to accommodate travel and medical office schedules, which could increase the cost and ever-slightly elevate her medical risk, even though abortion remains much safer than delivery at term. She would also be challenged to receive continuity of care in follow-up visits from medical professionals trained and experienced in abortion.

NO ROE NATION: WHAT CLERGY NEED TO KNOW AND DO....

- Sign up for Concerned Clergy for Choice email alerts and mailings. Contact info@edfundfpa.org and make sure you are on the Concerned Clergy for Choice lists.
- Our government has three branches. We can communicate our feelings to those who appoint judges, as well as members of the executive and the legislative branches.
- Know the doctors and legislators in your community. And let them know that you are pro-choice.
- Always keep informed about the law regarding the provision of pastoral care. Consult an attorney about your rights, responsibilities and the consequences of your actions.

CLERGY ADVISORY BOARD

The Clergy Advisory Board, a group of pro-choice clergy spanning an array of faiths and regions of New York State, advises the Concerned Clergy for Choice project.

Members include:

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
Unitarian Universalist Rochester

The Rev. James R. Bridges
*Unitarian Universalist
Congregation at Rock Tavern*

The Rev. Tom Davis
*United Church of Christ
Saratoga Springs*

The Rev. Dr. Paula Gravelle
Lutheran, Schenectady

Rabbi Marc Gruber
*Central Synagogue
Rockville Centre*

The Rev. Tomi Jacobs
*United Church of Christ
Interim Protestant Chaplain
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY*

Rabbi Alison Kobey
*B'rith Kodesh
Rochester, NY*

The Rev. Joel Miller
*Unitarian Universalist Church
Buffalo*

The Rev. Melanie Miller
*United Church of Christ
Chappaqua*

The Rev. Larry Phillips
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The Rev. Finley Schaeff
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