

## Roe v. Wade, A Look Back & Forward

### A Brief History

In its 1973 ruling *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court made abortion legal. In *Roe* a woman claimed she was pregnant from rape and wanted an abortion (“Jane Roe”). On the same day the court also decided a similar case, *Doe v. Bolton*. These rulings effectively struck down abortion laws across the nation.

The Supreme Court *Roe* ruling found that the right of privacy (not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution text) extends to a woman’s right to abortion. Further, the Court found that the health of the mother was to include “all factors - physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman’s age - relevant to the wellbeing of the patient.” This definition made it impossible to place any meaningful restrictions on abortion.

### Opposition Still Strong

Contrary to popular belief, public opposition to abortion has remained strong. Public polling shows that most Americans oppose unlimited abortion. A Zogby International April 2004 poll found that 56% of Americans would ban abortions or allow them only for cases of rape, incest, or danger to a mother’s life; these cases make up a small percentage of all abortions. Further, *Roe* has been criticized by legal experts and several Supreme Court justices. Justice Byron White called it “an exercise of raw judicial power.”

### The Results

U.S. abortions now total over a million a year, meaning that one-fourth of all pregnancies end in abortion. Since *Roe* became law there has been an increase in “unwanted” children, child abuse and abandonment, and other problems *Roe* was supposed to cure. Many women have been maimed or killed by abortion, due to lack of medical oversight of abortion clinics, and many more women have been emotionally scarred.

If *Roe* were reversed, it would not automatically mean that abortions would become illegal. States would again be allowed to make laws protecting both women and children, and place reasonable restrictions on unlimited abortions. A reversal would not mean a return to dangerous “back alley” abortions, either. The truth is, medical advances had almost eliminated deaths from all abortions, both legal and illegal, by 1972. In fact, abortions have been declining for the last 10 years, an indication that Americans have seen problems with abortion on demand.

As you can see, we have nothing to fear from a reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, and everything to gain.

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Written by *Helen Michaletz* for the Messenger parish newsletter, Fall 2005.