The fight for women's reproductive rights has been ongoing for decades. The year of 1973 was the turning point for all pro-choice Americans, as the U.S. Supreme Court addressed the landmark case of Roe V. Wade, granting women the right to have an abortion without government interferance. Though after this decision there were still, of course, pro-life Americans who actively opposed abortion, the law now protected a woman's right to choose, allowing women to finally breathe.

When Donald Trump became president in 2016, it was obvious from the beginning that he would be making large efforts to stop abortions from occuring. One way that he did this was through the Title X Gag rule, a dangerous and unethical policy in which doctors working at health care facilities and clinics that receive government funding were no longer legally allowed to inform their patients about all of their reproductive options. Some federally-funded medical centers, such as Planned Parenthood, which provides care to 41% of low-income women, refused to accept Title X funds so that they didn't have to follow this policy. Because of this choice, these clinics lacked the money to properly distribute birth control to their patients, execute cancer screenings, and complete STD testing.

As of October 24, 2021, almost ten months after Joe Biden took office as President of the United States, the Biden administration has reversed the Title X Gag rule, allowing health clinics to recieve government funding even if they suggest or advise patients on abortions. The new rule will officially be instituted on November 5th, 2021.

Despite this victory for women in America, conservative lawmakers and politicians are going above and beyond to put limits on women's bodies and abortions in very drastic ways. Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a new abortion law that went into effect on September 1, 2021 that seems to possess the most threatening and vicious measures of any anti-abortion law thus far. Frequently known as the Texas Abortion Law or the Texas Heartbeat Bill, this policy bans abortions from occuring once a fetal heartbeat can be detected. This usually happens around the six-week mark of pregnancy, a time when most women don't even know that they're pregnant yet. In addition to the alarmingly short amount of time that women will now have to get an abortion (which isn't as shocking or as new of an idea as one might think), this policy also makes it legal, and even encourages ordinary citizens to report suspicions of an abortion to authorities. Now, if a woman recieves an abortion past the six-week limit, somebody who hasn't even met her can turn her in and even go as far as to sue anybody who participated or assisted in making the abortion happen. While no one can take legal action against the woman who recieves the abortion herself, doctors, insurance companies, nurses, and even ride share drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft are now vulnerable to lawsuits. What makes this bill even more extreme and outlandish than any other policy in the past is that those who file complaints and lawsuits against individuals who were involved in the abortion procedure can receieve $10,000, and their legal fees will also be paid if they win the case.

How could a policy as horrific and unconstitutional as the Texas Abortion Ban even happen? This law was enacted because the Supreme Court refused to stop it from being passed when it was presented to them, and as a result, other states are now taking inspiration

from Texas to follow in their footsteps and pass legislation that will limit women in the same, dire ways. According to The New York Times, “lawmakers and executives in at least seven states have said they are considering similar statutes. Gov. Kristi L. Noem of South Dakota, a Republican, said she had directed lawyers in her office to review S. B. 8 “to make sure we have the strongest pro-life laws on the books.” Around the same time, Wilton Simpson, the Republican leader of the Florida State Senate, said that members of his chamber were already working on a statute similar to the one in Texas.”

The real reason, though, why laws like this are being created, is because “pro-life” Americans genuinley believe that placing a ban on abortions is a pro-life thing to do. However, research shows that this is not the case. Just because abortions are criminalized doesn’t mean that women won’t still get one. If women aren’t given a safe place to have the medical procedure done properly and legally, they *will* look elsewhere. This inevitably leads to higher crime rates, as well as a higher mortality rate amongst pregnant women, which is a contradiction of a “pro-life” belief, since women who are already living are dying because of a law that protects the unborn. According to the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 45 percent of global abortions are unsafe, and unsafe abortions account for 13 percent of the materal mortality rate. With policies such as the Texas Abortion Ban, these percentages will only increase, as evidence also shows that “abortion rates are roughly the same in countries where abortion is broadly legal and in countries where it isn’t. Abortion rates are actually four times higher in low-income countries where abortion is prohibited than in high-income countries where it is broadly legal,” says Zara Ahemed, a reporter for NBC News.

Amidst the push for more restrictive abortion laws on the conservative side, another conversation has sparked throughout the country regarding male birth control and its ability to be an alternative option to female birth control as a proactive measure to avoid pregnancy. Currently, the only forms of male birth control that are available are condoms, conventional vasectomies, and no-scalpel vasectomies. Both kinds of vasectomies require the vas deferens to be cut and then tied off in order to separate the sperm from the semen. These procedures are typically covered by insurance, and what makes them more efficient is that they can usually be reversed. In addition to these male birth control options, more research and experiments are being done that revolve around non-surgical and less invasive choices.

According to Healthline, the other male birth control options that are currently being studied are “Vas-occlusive injected gel.. a nonhormonal gel that’s injected into the vas deferens. It blocks sperm from traveling into seminal fluid.” Also being studied is “Topical gel. UC Davis Health is running a clinical trial on a hormonal gel product that is rubbed into the shoulders. The gel contains synthetic progestin, which blocks natural testosterone production in the testes.” While a daily birth control pill would be most efficient for most men, it is not available quite yet, however there are a few clinical trials happening.

The idea of male birth control is becoming more popular amongst women because of the fact that women can only become pregnant once in the span of 9-10 months, but men can impregnate one woman everyday during that time period. Another reason for its rising popularity

is because it would help lower abortion rates altogether. Research shows that when female birth control is easily accessible, the number of abortions that are performed decreases. If men, too, began taking birth control, these percentages would go down even more, further helping prevent pregnancy at its core. Instead of putting immoral policies in place to attack abortion rights, Republican lawmakers and politicians should shift their focus on providing free and accessible female birth control in addition to obtaining funding for further research on male birth control. This would be the more “pro-life” course of action, as it would significantly decrease the possibility of pregnancy overall, and would furthermore eliminate the need for an abortion.

The volatile Texas Abortion Ban will negativley impact the lives of not only women, but all pro-choice Americans who support or assistant women who find themselves in need of an abortion.