

Wisconsin reacts to landmark court ruling

Planned Parenthood, Pro-Life, local community respond

By Hunter Turpin
hturpin@conley.net.com
262-513-2681

WAUKESHA COUNTY — The U.S. Supreme Court's 6-3 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, eliminating the federal right to an abortion, has sparked quick and passionate reactions from government officials, organizations and citizens who both support and denounce the decision.

In Wisconsin, doctors immediately stopped providing abortions Friday due to a 173-year-old state ban. According to The Associated Press, nearly 70 women had abortion procedures scheduled with Planned Parenthood Wisconsin on Friday and four women had abortions at Planned Parenthood clinics Friday morning before the Supreme Court's order. Clinics elsewhere — including Alabama, Texas and West Virginia — stopped performing abortions for fear of prosecution.

Ultimately, the enforcement of Wisconsin's 1849 law remains a question, with Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul, a Democrat, planning to share news on how the office will respond to the ruling sometime next week.

Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne, whose jurisdiction includes Madison, said for the first time that he would not enforce the state's ban. Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm has previously suggested that he would not enforce it, either.

Under the Wisconsin law, doctors could be charged with felonies for performing abortions and face up to six years in prison and \$10,000 in fines.

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Reaction

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Planned Parenthood, Pro-Life Wisconsin

"We remain dedicated to fighting for a better future, we remain dedicated to ensuring that people can make decisions about having a family or not, who can make decisions about the future of their lives and their family," said Tanya Atkinson, the president of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, in a press conference. "Your health and the health of the community are our number one priority. Planned Parenthood will not back down, not now, not ever."

Anti-abortion groups across the state released statements praising the Supreme Court's decision.

"Pro-Life Wisconsin rejoices, for today is a day many pro-life individuals have dreamt of for decades, if not entire lifetimes," a statement from Pro-Life Wisconsin says. "Since January 22, 1973, the day on which unfettered abortion was unleashed on our country, millions of Americans have prayed, fasted, marched, and advocated for the lives of preborn children. For nearly 50 years, pro-lifers have spoken out against the atrocity of abortion and proclaimed the truth from the rooftops: that abortion ends a human life."

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin Medical Director Kathy King said that there were patients waiting to receive abortions at the three abortion clinics in the state who could no longer receive the abortion they anticipated.

"Today, I had to look people in the eye and turn them away when they were seeking an abortion," King said at a press conference. "The patients I see who have abortions are all of us. They're your friends, your family, your neighbors, members of our community, our state."

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin said in a statement that it will help patients access legal abortions in other states, but will no longer provide abortions in Wisconsin.

The Planned Parenthood health centers in Waukesha and West Bend did not comment on the decision; neither of these locations was one of the three locations providing abortions. Individual Planned Parenthood health centers did not talk to the news media, out of respect for the confidentiality of the patients it is trying to provide health care to, said Lisa Boyce, who works for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin media and communications.

Local and statewide response

Mayson Taylor, a Richfield resident, said life begins at conception and abortion is murder and supports the Supreme Court's ruling.

"It gives the states the right to choose if they want to legalize abortions or ban them," Taylor said. "Which is how it should have always been. It's not up to the federal government to decide if someone wants to kill a baby, it is up to the states."

However, Leah McDonald, a resident of Waukesha County, is concerned about many things, including exceptions for sexual

assault, exceptions for medical problems, overflowing foster care and the lengths people seeking abortions may go to.

"Women are either going to travel great lengths to get one or harm themselves to just have an abortion. Why do we have to take away a safe option?" McDonald said.

Some organizations that oppose the Supreme Court decision are looking into ways to help women continue to access legal abortions and are hoping to mobilize voters this November to flip seats.

"This will be on the ballot in the fall. I'm talking about basic human rights," said Kristin Hansen, president of Blue Sky Waukesha, an organization that aims to bring civics education to people. "I will be making sure people know how to vote, when to vote, that they will be able to overcome any barrier that Republicans put up in their way, and I say Republicans sadly."

Matt Mareno, chair of the Waukesha County Democratic Party, said the party is disappointed the court rolled back 50 years of precedent.

"Locally, we are focused on making sure that every voter in Waukesha knows that in November, this is a referendum on this decision," Mareno said. "If you are somebody who supports someone's right to have an abortion, have the privacy with their own doctor to make their own decision, then you need to vote for the Democratic Party because the Republicans have made it painfully clear that they are OK with controlling aspects of your life as long as it aligns with their agenda."

The Republican Party of Waukesha County did not respond to request for comment Friday. The Wisconsin GOP said in a statement: "Today's Supreme Court decision represents a historic victory in the fight to protect the unborn, an affirmation of our Constitution, and the return of policy-making back to the people and our elected representatives, as our Founders intended. Republicans will continue to speak up for unborn children and vulnerable mothers and families. We welcome all Wisconsinites who believe in the sanctity of life to join us."

Wisconsin Right to Life is also celebrating the decision.

"This is a monumental step toward the protection of all human life, including the most valuable among us, preborn children. By overturning Roe and Casey, the Supreme Court emphasized the foundational truth that the right to an abortion does not appear in the United States Constitution."

Hansen, of Blue Sky Waukesha, is concerned about other rights that the court could address, such as the right to contraception or same-sex marriage which are also not in the Constitution, she said, citing Justice Clarence Thomas' concurring opinion where he wrote that the court "should reconsider" these rulings. The majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito said nothing in this decision "should be understood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion."

Contributing: The Associated Press