

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

Public Policy Memo
Legalization of Abortion

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Picture a world where women have the freedom to control their own destinies, where their reproductive choices are respected and protected. Embodied with hope and liberation, the groundbreaking Supreme Court ruling of Roe v. Wade shattered the chains of reproductive oppression; forever shaping the future of women's rights in America where autonomy and choice are cherished cornerstones of our society.

In 1973, the Roe decision made state abortion bans unconstitutional and abortion care legal, more accessible, and safer throughout the United States. After multiple lawsuits over several years, in 2022, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and eliminated the unconstitutional right to abortion. It took the Court less than 50 years to decide that the constitutional right was now “egregiously wrong,” reaffirming that Roe “must be overturned” (Totenberg and McCammon).

Here's a perspective to consider throughout this memo: Abortion legality is often seen as a matter of personal autonomy and healthcare. It is believed that every individual should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, including whether or not to continue with a pregnancy. Without legal options, those seeking abortions might turn to unsafe methods, risking their health. And why should women have to take all these loopholes to just have a procedure that was once a constitutional right?

Public support for legal abortion remains largely unchanged, about 62% saying it should be legal in all or most cases. Nearly six-in-ten adults (57%) disapprove of the court's decision, including 43% who *strongly disapprove*. About four-in-ten (41%) approve of the court's decision including 25% strongly approve (Pew Research Center). With numbers that support legal abortions, it makes no sense that the Court would not listen to the people of this country. But let's dig deeper into the equity aspect. When I talk about equity in the context of abortion access, I am

referring to the idea that everyone should have equal opportunities and resources to make decisions about their reproductive health. Restrictions on abortion can affect marginalized communities, including those with lower income, limited access to healthcare, or facing systematic barriers. These restrictions can make it harder for individuals in these communities to access safe and legal abortion services. By ensuring that abortions are legal and accessible in all states, we can help promote reproductive justice and ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to make choices about their own bodies and futures. It's about creating a more equitable society where everyone's needs and circumstances are taken into account.

A recent case that The Center for Reproductive Rights filed in Texas State court on behalf of Kate Cox. Kate Cox, a pregnant woman seeking an emergency abortion due to complications in her pregnancy. This case grabbed my attention because it is in a state where abortions are completely illegal, so I questioned how this case was going to play out. These complications caused multiple structural abnormalities and there was no chance of survival. Also, Cox had already undergone two C-sections before this and if she has another then she would be considered high risk for multiple serious medical conditions. Cox asked the Texas Court to temporarily block the state's abortion bans so she can proceed with the care she needs within the state and avoid the dangerous risks for her life from being forced to stay pregnant. The Texas Court denied Cox's request for emergency abortion care. Hours after Cox announced she left the state to receive care elsewhere, the Court ruled on her case, validating her decision of receiving care elsewhere. In the condition that Cox was in, why did it have to get to the point where she leaves the state to receive safe and legal care? With the perspective I mentioned earlier, Texas is nothing close to a more equitable society, but the ruling did offer some insight into how the court would interpret the law going forward. It is the tiniest baby step towards the

future of women's rights (Center for Reproductive Rights). Several other states are similar to a total-near ban on abortions like Texas, which means there could be several other cases similar to Kate Cox's.

My father once told me that my generation had not experienced enough historic events like his generation has. And then COVID-19 happened in 2020. After the pandemic, it was like one historic event after the next. In 2022, the overruling of Roe v. Wade personally raised my eyebrows because as a woman who lives in a state where abortions *are* legal, it was difficult to see other women have all these challenges in order to have a procedure that was once a constitutional right. I gathered at the Washington State capitol with fellow abortion supporters and it was enlightening at the fact that I did not feel alone about wanting a world where reproductive choices are respected and protected.

WORK CITED

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2. “Roe v. Wade.” *Center for Reproductive Rights*, 30 June 2023, <https://reproductiverights.org/roe-v-wade/>
3. Totenberg, Nina, and Sarah McCammon. “Supreme Court Overturns Roe v. Wade, Ending Right to Abortion Upheld for Decades.” *NPR*, NPR, 24 June 2022, www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1102305878/supreme-court-abortion-roe-v-wade-decision-overturn#:~:text=In%20a%20historic%20and%20far,half%20century%2C%20no%20longer%20exists.