MEMORANDUM

To: NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation
From: Avalanche Insights
Date: July 20, 2022
Subject: Refining the Narrative on Abortion Access in 2022

After the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and the constitutional right to abortion as we know it in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* on June 24, 2022, NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation sought to **rapidly understand people's emotional relationship to abortion in that defining moment.** We aimed to uncover which narrative elements resonate most strongly with target audiences, and how different groups are interpreting the decision, perceiving threats to abortion access, and characterizing those they blame. We had the ability to do a **change-over-time analysis** and track how emotions and perceptions compare to our last survey, which was fielded just prior to the leak in April. We fielded this survey June 24-27 then used Avalanche's proprietary technology to identify and quantify themes for the **5,034 registered voters'** responses.

We found that a successful narrative would:

1. **Lead with the powerful value of <u>freedom</u>.** With limited attention and resources, we recommend leading with the freedom to decide. Freedom is resonating with the base and conflicted supporters, as well as Soft Biden and Soft Trump women. The <u>empath</u>y frame remains resonant as well, particularly with older and white voters.

2. **Drive empathy and urgency with a broad range of stories.** There is increasing awareness of and concern for people facing health and safety issues related to pregnancy. We can drive activating emotions and deeper empathy by showing the <u>full range of stories</u> that demonstrate the reality people are facing right now.

3. **Double down on uncaring politicians who only want to <u>stay in power</u>.** There is still work to be done to accurately define those working to ban abortion. We found that it is critical to focus on villains' motivations – staying in power – to illuminate how at-odds they are with most Americans' values. We recommend demonstrating the many ways politicians who want to ban abortion don't support families (i.e. voting against easing the formula shortage) and showing the great lengths they go to keep their special interests happy, regardless of the consequences on Americans.

4. **Channel determination to invigorate the fight.** We are celebrating how motivated people say they are feeling to vote for pro-choice candidates in November. We recommend building on this momentum by channeling the determination we're hearing – using a <u>determined tone</u> in messaging – and showing collective action to inspire more people to take individual action.

Key Takeaways

The findings below reflect an analysis of typical closed-ended responses as well as themes we found in the actual word-for-word responses of voters to open-ended questions. Double quotes (") are used around the wording of closed-ended options. Single quotes (') are used around the names we gave to summarize a theme reflected in the actual words of respondents to open-ended questions.

To create the main segments for our analysis, we used the answers to a closed-ended question NARAL had used in the past to gauge abortion attitudes:

- *Full Supporters* (48% of voters) chose "I personally support a woman's right to abortion and believe it should be legal and available."
  - **This segment increased by 6% since April, which reflects an extremely meaningful difference.**
- *Conflicted Supporters* (25% of voters) chose "I am personally against abortion, but I do not believe government should prevent a woman from making that decision for herself."
  - This segment saw a decrease by 2% since April.
- *Opponents* (20% of voters) chose "I personally believe having an abortion is wrong and should be illegal."
  - This segment decreased by 4% since April.
- An additional 7% chose "I am unsure" and are excluded from the main analysis.

In addition to abortion attitude, we segmented by 2020 vote choice and strength of support (which gave us Strong Biden, Soft Biden, Strong Trump, and Soft Trump segments)and by gender, urbanicity, and race.

Internalized Associations
Respondents were asked to use their own words in response to several open-ended questions:

- Half of 'Full Supporters' (the base) and 1 in 5 'Conflicted Supporters' associate abortion with **rights and freedoms**. This reflects a 10 point increase for both groups since April.
  - **This increased 14 and 12 points respectively among Soft Biden and Soft Trump women voters.**
- Remaining steady since April, 36% of respondents **blame politicians** for efforts to ban abortion, with an increase in those who cite state/local governments and Republicans specifically.
  - Also remaining steady since April, 38% of voters say those responsible for efforts to restrict access to abortion are motivated by "pro-life" beliefs.
  - Over a tenth of those who support access to abortion mention **power and control**; Soft Biden and Soft Trump women voters are both less likely to mention "pro-life" beliefs now than in April.

Perceptions on Narrative Elements

Values
We tested three values statements head-to-head and gauged their performance in terms of agreement, emotional activation, and shareability:

Freedom	**Rights**	**Empathy for Individual**
No matter where a person lives, what they look like, or what they do, everyone should have the freedom to decide what is best for themselves and their families, including when it comes to abortion.	*No matter where a person lives, what they look like, or what they do, every person should have the right to receive the health care they need, including when it comes to abortion.*	*No matter where a person lives, what they look like, or what they do, every person's life has its own unique circumstances. People, not politicians, should be able to make their own decisions, including when it comes to abortion care.*

A strong majority (68-71%) of all respondents agree with all three values statements.

- ~70% of 'Full Supporters' and 1 in 3 'Conflicted Supporters' say they strongly agree with all.
- Younger, Latinx, and non-Hispanic Black voters agree most with 'Freedom,' while older and white voters agree most with 'Empathy.'
- Activating emotions (such as anger, urgency, hope, determination that inspire action) increased in response to 'Freedom' for both 'Full Supporters' and 'Conflicted Supporters' since April.
- While the 'Rights' frame is valid, it may be getting a boost from what people are hearing in the news.

Villain

We tested 3 different characterizations of the politicians banning abortion:

Uncaring	*Money*	*Control*	*Opposition*
The politicians working to ban abortion are doing nothing to prevent people from dying during childbirth, to address the baby formula shortage, or to ensure families have the support they need. They only care about staying in power.	*The politicians working to ban abortion only care about the money they get from lobbyists and fringe groups that keeps them in power.*	*The politicians working to ban abortion want to control people's decisions, bodies, and lives so they can score political points and stay in power.*	*The politicians working to ban abortion care about mothers and the life of the unborn child.*

Voters agree that politicians only care about staying in power, but there remains room to lean into this piece of the narrative. All three villain characterizations elicited agreement from a strong majority of respondents (66-68%). About 4 in 10 show a stronger intensity of agreement for all three.

- In a closed-ended question, Black and Latinx voters are more likely than non-Hispanic white voters to agree that politicians only care about staying in power. Half say they strongly agree.
- When asked in an open-ended question, older, white voters are more likely to use language that describes "pro-life" beliefs than younger voters or voters of color. Black and Latinx voters are more likely to say they don't know the motivation of those working to restrict access to abortion.

Court Interpretations

In an open-ended question asking how a respondent would explain the Court's decision to a friend, supporters and opponents alike cite abortion control moving to the state level.

- Full Supporters are more likely to cite the loss of a right & freedom or 'bodily autonomy;' those conflicted are more likely to mention it as 'illegal and inaccessible.'
- Women voters are more likely than their male counterparts to say the Court's decision means the loss of bodily autonomy, a right & freedom.

The following table shows a selection of responses representative of each of the **top themes reflected from respondents' own words**:

Loss of a right and freedom	Abortion is illegal and inaccessible	Loss of bodily autonomy
"As an American woman, my country just took my own personal freedom away. I don't feel as patriotic about America as I did a year ago." *- Female, 65+, Soft Biden* **"The rights of women to choose what's best for them and their body has been taken away. The right to other types of healthcare will soon follow."** *- Female, 40-49, Nonvoter* **"That the right to abortion is not protected by the constitution, and state and federal lawmakers must write new laws to allow access to abortions."** *- Female, 65+, Strong Biden*	**"That they have taken away our federal right for abortion care and left the decision to the states who will ban abortion and make it a felony for doctors to provide abortions for ANY reason."** *- Female, 40-49, Strong Biden* **"That means that women are not allowed to make a choice for their own health care. That means that in any situation a woman is forced to carry a baby that she may not want."** *- Female, 18-29, Soft Biden* **"She is a second class citizen who could be forced to complete a pregnancy against her wishes."** *- Male, 65+, Strong Biden*	**"Basically that women have no control over their bodies and the government needs to mind their own business."** *- Female, 40-49, Strong Trump* **"Essentially, the ability to obtain a safe abortion drops significantly while increasing the number of unsafe abortions and death count of any person who can carry children."** *- Female, 18-29, Soft Biden* **"We no longer have bodily autonomy, the right to choose what we want, or the right to privacy no matter what the circumstances are or if it is life threatening or not. You no longer get to choose if you want to have a child."** *- Non-binary, 18-29, Soft Biden*

Perceptions of Threats to Abortion Access

Compared to April, all respondents are more likely to believe that abortion care is very difficult to access, both in their own state and in the country as a whole.

- **Suburban women are 12pts more likely to believe abortion care is 'very difficult' to access in the US and 8pts more likely to believe it's 'very difficult' in their own state.**
- Full supporters are 12pts more likely to say they are 'very concerned' about not having abortion access.
- Women in rural areas are 21pts more likely to say they are 'very concerned' about not having access to 'miscarriage management or abortion.'
- Latinx voters are 17pts more likely to say they are 'very concerned' about not having access to 'miscarriage management or abortion.' Non-Hispanic Black voters are 13pts more likely to say so.

- 60% of women with a college degree currently believe it is 'somewhat' or 'very difficult' to access an abortion in the US. Around half of women without a degree believe it's difficult, and they are 9pts and 7pts more likely since April to believe it's 'very difficult' in the US and their own state, respectively.

Motivation to Act

When asked how likely they are to take action in response to hearing the Supreme Court's decision to eliminate the constitutional right to an abortion:

- **68% of those who intend to vote in 2022 report being much (52%) or somewhat (16%) more motivated to vote after the decision.** This includes 81% of 'Full Supporters,' 64% of 'Conflicted Supporters,' and 51% of opposition voters.
- 4 in 10 voters say they plan to take additional action -- calling their representative (40%), donating (40%), posting on social media (41%), joining a protest (33%) -- in response to the decision.

Moving Forward

Overall, the data shows consistent positive movement from pre-leak in April to post-decision in July. **That 6% more respondents since April self-identified that they "personally support a woman's right to abortion and believe it should be legal and available" reflects an extremely meaningful difference in a short period of time.**

- Because 'freedom' resonates with this base as well as conflicted supporters, including Soft Biden and Soft Trump women, we recommend leading with this underlined powerful values-based motivator in messaging.
- With a plurality of open-ended responses blaming politicians for restricting access to abortion, and the strong agreement that politicians are doing so to stay in power, we recommend leaning into this piece of the narrative to crystalize who is standing in the way of access to care - and *why*.
- Finally, we recommend activating deep empathy by sharing the full range of stories that depict the reality people face today and using a determined tone in messaging to reflect the determination we are seeing in our growing base of support and motivate strong action this fall and beyond.

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