

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: EMILY's List, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood Action Fund
RE: The undeniable role of abortion in the 2022 midterms
DATE: November 15, 2022

As results continue to trickle in following the 2022 midterms, **one truth is undeniably clear: when abortion is on the ballot, freedom wins.** Abortion was the [game changer](#) this election – defying history and the pundits to drive monumental victories for reproductive rights champions and abortion access across the country.

Planned Parenthood advocacy and political organizations, EMILY's List, and NARAL Pro-Choice America knew that abortion would be at the top of voters' minds this election, which is why together they committed to making historic investments in this year's elections—even before the leaked U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization* started to shake the political environment. These groups offered research, training, messaging, and significant investments in electoral programs across the country, as well as efforts to keep abortion rights top of mind for voters and the media. These investments paid off. Voters motivated by this issue—driven by a coalition of diverse women across racial, age, and marital status, and young people—created a blockade to the “red wave” and propelled ballot measures and abortion rights candidates across the finish line in key congressional seats, gubernatorial races, and state legislatures.

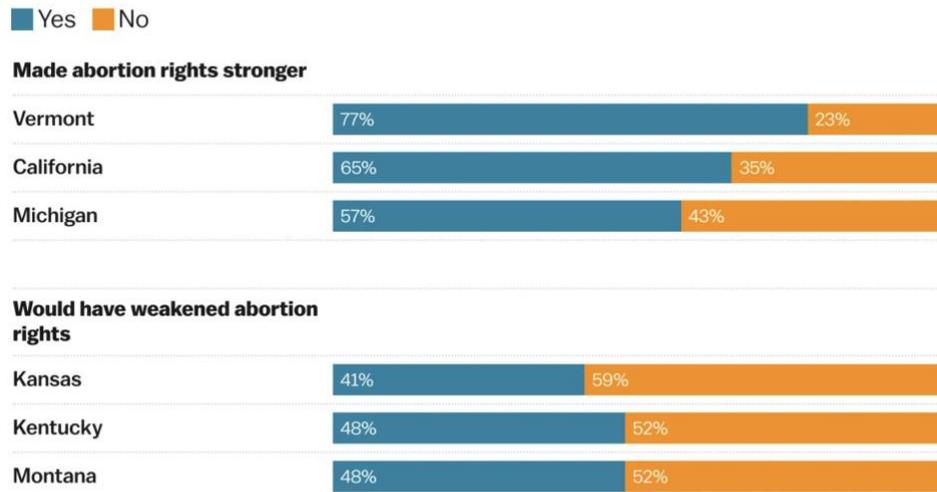
In fact, exit polling shows that abortion was a top two issue for voters as they headed to the polls and the dominant reason that people who voted for democrats decided to do so. [Post-election polling in key Senate and gubernatorial battleground states](#) finds abortion was the driving force behind Democrats' wins in the 2022 midterms. Across battleground states, 45% of voters say that abortion played a larger role in their voting decisions than it had in past elections, including 64% of voters who voted for a Democrat for Senate and/or Governor this year, 52% of Black voters, and 51% of voters ages 18-34 ([NARAL/ Impact](#)).

The lessons from this election are clear: candidates should feel emboldened to talk about their support for reproductive freedom and abortion access because voters unequivocally do not want politicians interfering in their personal health care decisions.

Abortion Was Literally On The Ballot and Abortion Won

- Through votes on ballot measures in Kentucky, Montana, Michigan, California, and Vermont, voters resoundingly said they want to control their own bodies, lives, and futures.
- Abortion supporters are now 6-0 for ballot initiatives since the *Dobbs* decision, proving that politicians who attack abortion access represent a radical fringe movement — not the will of the people.

Americans keep voting to protect abortion rights



Preliminary results as of 3 pm November 9, 2022.

Source: Associated Press

recode BY Vox

Abortion Rights Champions Succeed at Ballot Box

- In Michigan, abortion fueled a sweep of state-wide races, including the re-election of Governor Gretchen Whitmer, flipped both chambers of the state legislature, and secured a victory for a constitutional amendment to enshrine abortion rights into the state constitution.
- In Pennsylvania, abortion delivered a seismic victory, up and down the ballot, turning out women and [young voters](#) in record numbers for Josh Shapiro and key House members up for re-election, flipping a long-held Republican Senate seat for John Fetterman, electing Summer Lee, the first Black woman to Congress, and flipping control of the State House for the first time in a decade.
- Governors like Tony Evers in Wisconsin and Laura Kelly in Kansas, who had served as a backstop in their states to additional abortion restrictions, won re-election. So did reproductive health champions Michelle Lujan Grisham in New Mexico, Jared Polis in Colorado, Tina Kotek in Oregon, Kathy Hochul in New York, Maura Healey in Massachusetts, Janet Mills in Maine, and J.B. Pritzker in Illinois. And reproductive rights champion Katie Hobbs will be Arizona's next governor, flipping that seat for the first time since 2009.
- Senators [Catherine Cortez Masto](#) in Nevada, Tammy Duckworth in Illinois, Maggie Hassan in New Hampshire, and Patty Murray in Washington made abortion a centerpiece of their campaigns, helping to boost them to victory.

“Voters who supported reproductive freedom turned out for Democrats in the midterms, blunting what was widely expected to be a Republican wave.” [\[Time 11/9/22\]](#)

Abortion Changed the Electorate and Motivated Voters

- A predicted driver of the 'red wave' was an assumed depression of Democratic turnout. And ahead of the *Dobbs* decision, Democratic enthusiasm to vote trailed Republicans' by double digits. With the *Dobbs* decision, Democratic intent to vote shot up, matching Republicans' enthusiasm.
- 76% of Democrats named abortion as the most important issue deciding their vote, far outpacing any other issue. ([NBC News](#)) Young people ages 18-24 named abortion as their top issue and 74% said they were not willing to vote for a candidate who didn't support access to abortion. ([The 19th](#))
- Young, diverse voters turned out at the highest rate (27%) in decades. They also broke for Democrats at a higher margin than any other demographic, preferring Democrats in the House of Representatives nearly twice as much as their GOP counterparts (63% - 35%). Support was even stronger among Black youth (89%) and Latino youth (68%), making it clear that this group of young, diverse voters who prefer Democrats and cite abortion as a major concern carried the day ([CIRCLE/Tufts](#)).
- According to exit polling and AP VoteCast, around 8 in 10 Black men supported Democrats and nearly 9 in 10 Black women supported Democrats, confirming that diverse voters remain the base of power for Democratic candidates ([Washington Post](#)).
- Post-Dobbs, the number of women registering to vote rose by 35%, compared to 9% for men – a gender gap that would persist through election day and have major impacts for candidates. Women also made up 55% of newly registered voters in the lead-up to the election ([New York Times](#)).
- Prior to the election, Eight in 10 American adults (81%) said abortion is important to their midterm vote, including a 56% majority who said it is very important ([PORES/Survey Monkey](#)). A [Gallup](#) poll found that 42% of voters consider the topic of abortion “extremely important,” right behind the economy and ahead of crime on the list of voters' top concerns.
- Half of all voters say the Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* made them MORE motivated to vote ([Kaiser Family Foundation](#)). 62% of Americans report being more motivated to vote by the news of a national abortion ban, including 77% Democrats, 71% of Hispanic Americans, and 67% of Black Americans ([Navigator](#)).

“Across the nation, voters felt an obligation to weigh in on what, for many, was a vital matter: abortion rights. “Abortion was my main, core issue,” said Urica Carver, 41, a registered Republican from Scranton, PA. [NYT, 11/10/22]

Anti-Abortion Politicians Know Abortion is Why They Lost

- In poll after poll, the issue of abortion remained one of the highest-ranking negatives against anti-abortion politicians. Any doubts about the power of abortion as a political issue should have been put to bed by the speed with which anti-abortion politicians [rushed](#) to flip, conceal, and sometimes completely scrub their previous positions on the issue.
- Many [candidates](#) even [tried](#) to convince voters that they have [no power](#) over abortion access.

- Anti-abortion candidates went [above](#) and [beyond](#) to [mislead](#) and keep their views from voters for one simple reason: they know voters reject their extreme and out-of-touch views.
- Anti-abortion politicians are even admitting the issue is why they were [defeated](#).

"We certainly emphasized the economy and inflation, and they were beating me over the head on abortion," he said. "That's the thing that beat me," said Mr. Chabot, an antiabortion candidate. [\[WSJ 11/9/22\]](#)

"Republican voters tend to be more pro-choice than the policies that we're seeing in Republican states," Shana Gadarian, a professor of political science at Syracuse University. [\[Axios 11/9/22\]](#)

The "Abortion vs. Economy" Debate Was Always a False Choice

- Asking voters to "choose" between the economy and abortion was a false choice and the wrong question to ask. Across the country, Americans immediately felt the impact of the fall of *Roe v. Wade*, as Republican politicians took away our constitutional rights. The stakes were clear. And voters understood that the ability to control our economic security is inextricably linked to our ability to decide whether and when to become a parent. Because people don't live single-issue lives, candidates didn't run single-issue campaigns.
- That's why candidates across the country campaigned on the things that matter most to voters: abortion access, and also their commitment to helping American families in this tough economic environment, lowering the cost of prescription drugs, and planning for climate change.

"It wasn't just 'the economy stupid'—it was abortion." [\[Brookings 11/10/22\]](#)

Takeaways

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* proved to be the catalyst of historic midterms for champions of reproductive health and rights. Women and young people registered to vote in record numbers following the *Dobbs* decision, and abortion proved to be a winning contrast between reproductive rights champions and their anti-abortion opponents. This election proves that the issue of abortion is a unifying message, not a dividing one. Voters channeled their rage, frustration, and desire for reproductive freedom to be protected by making their voices heard at the ballot box.

This election is by no means the end of the fight for reproductive freedom, as [1 in 3 women](#) are without access to abortion across the country. A whole-of-government response to the disastrous Supreme Court decision is needed and **the American people have given elected officials a directive: protect and restore abortion rights and access.**

About EMILY's List

EMILY's List, the nation's largest resource for women in politics, works to elect Democratic pro-choice women up and down the ballot and across the country with a goal of fighting for our rights and our communities. Our work is centered around a fundamental vision: Run. Win. Change the World. EMILY's List has raised over \$700 million in service to that vision and has helped Democratic women win competitive elections by recruiting and training candidates, supporting and helping build strong campaigns, researching the issues that impact women and families, running one of the largest independent expenditure campaigns for Democrats, and turning out women voters to the polls. Since our founding in 1985, we have helped elect the country's first woman as vice president, 159 women to the House, 26 to the Senate, 16 governors, and nearly 1,400 women to state and local office. More than 40% of the candidates EMILY's List has helped elect to Congress have been women of color. Visit www.emilyslist.org for more information.

About NARAL Pro-Choice America

For over 50 years, NARAL Pro-Choice America has fought to protect and advance reproductive freedom at the federal and state levels—including access to abortion care, birth control, pregnancy and post-partum care, and paid family leave—for *every* body. NARAL is powered by its 4 million members from every state and congressional district in the country, representing the 8 in 10 Americans who support legal abortion.

About Planned Parenthood Action Fund

Planned Parenthood Action Fund is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit membership organization formed as the advocacy and political arm of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. The Action Fund engages in educational, advocacy, and limited electoral activity, including grassroots organizing, legislative advocacy, and voter education.