

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: EMILY's List, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, All* Above All Action Fund

RE: How Abortion Redefined the 2022 Midterms

DATE: November 4, 2022

The Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. JWHO* decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and allow states to ban abortion created an ongoing public health crisis. Now [one in three](#) women live in a state where abortion is banned. It also redefined the 2022 midterm dynamics by sparking a wave of anger and energy among voters who viewed the decision as a direct attack on their rights and freedoms.

The political consequences from *Dobbs* were both immediate and enduring. **Now just four days before Election Day, abortion remains at the top of voters' minds as they head to the polls, and what was once thought to be a sure-fire wave election is now competitive up to the final moments, in no small part because of the bold, unabashed reproductive rights champions on the ballot across the country.**

The effect of abortion bans is not just felt in the state where they originate — each individual state is an important piece of the larger national puzzle, and none exist in a vacuum. States where abortion is still legal have been standing in the gap for patients who need and want this essential health care — making state assembly and governors races all the more important. It also makes holding the majorities in Congress critical. Republicans have already introduced a nationwide ban on abortion, and party leadership has acknowledged [plans](#) to pursue a [national ban](#) should they gain power in Congress.

Abortion and freedom are on the ballot. And that is motivating voters to the benefit of pro-choice candidates. **Poll after poll have made clear that a strong majority of the American people support abortion access, oppose the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe*, and believe the decision on whether to get an abortion belongs to us, not politicians.** The loss of that freedom has motivated voters and has the potential to turn the tides for candidates who support abortion rights across the country.

Still, there are a number of flawed or false narratives being spread about the importance and prevalence of abortion in this election. **The truth is, candidates are talking about abortion because it is critical to fight against the loss of our rights, because voters have said it matters to them, because it has a major economic and social impact on voters, and because it's a defining issue in this election.**

The Election Was Never Expected to be this Close

- Historical precedent shows that the party in the White House [almost always loses](#) seats in the midterm elections.
- Redistricting, though not as severe as anticipated, still advantaged Republicans [overall](#), a challenge for the very narrow House majority.

- Lagging economic indicators, including global inflation, often rebound on the party in the White House.

The Supreme Court Decision Changed the Election Narrative and Closed Voter Enthusiasm Gap

- While voters have supported abortion rights and *Roe v. Wade* by large margins for decades, the *Dobbs* decision eliminated any doubt that abortion rights were at risk and demonstrated clearly that abortion access was on the ballot this election.
- The voter enthusiasm gap [was erased](#) almost [immediately](#) after *Roe* was overturned, and the results came quickly: defying all expectations, Kansas overwhelmingly rejected an anti-abortion referendum that proponents had purposefully put on a primary election ballot when turnout is typically lower. Just weeks later, Pat Ryan won a special election in New York after he made abortion the centerpiece of his campaign.
- New voter registration among women surged after the *Dobbs* decision. Tom Bonier, CEO of TargetSmart, wrote in the NYT [that](#) “Women are registering to vote in numbers I never witnessed before.” 45 days after *Dobbs* was decided, women [increased](#) their share of new registrations in all but four states across the country.

“We are all firmly convinced of the power and central importance of abortion. The Dobbs decision changed the trajectory of this election, and it is the most powerful issue we have in turning out Democratic base voters. No Democratic candidate should stop talking about abortion.” – [Memo from Patrick Gaspard, Stanley Greenberg, Celinda Lake, Mike Lux, Oct. 21, 2022](#)

Abortion is (Still) On Top of Voters’ Minds & Is Top Contrast Message

- Abortion remains one of voters’ top concerns this midterm election, and continues to motivate people at the ballot box.
- Eight in 10 American adults (81%) say abortion is important to their midterm vote, including a 56% majority who say it is very important ([PORES/Survey Monkey](#)). A new [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* 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 three in four Democrats (77 %) 71% of Hispanic Americans, and 67% of Black Americans. This compares to fewer than half of Republicans (48%) and “pro-life” Americans (49%) being more motivated to vote by a potential abortion ban ([Navigator](#)).
- 71% of Latinos said they could NOT vote for a candidate who supports a nationwide ban on abortions with no exceptions. Similarly, 70% said they are less likely to vote for a politician who seeks to ban abortion, contraception, and Plan B. ([BSP Research](#))
- A [poll](#) across nine battleground states finds that among young women voters, ages 18-29, abortion and women’s rights are the most important and highly motivating issues in determining their vote. Another poll [found](#) that abortion was the second most important issue to college students, and the most important issue for college women.

- New polling from the National Women’s Law Center found that women of color in [Georgia](#), [Michigan](#), and [Nevada](#) all consider reproductive freedom as a top-of-mind, motivating issue.

Anti-Abortion Politicians Understood Voters’ Anger, Tried to Hide Their Positions

- In poll after poll, the issue of abortion is one of the highest ranking negatives against anti-abortion politicians. Any doubts about the power of abortion as a political issue should be put to bed by the speed with which anti-abortion politicians [rushed](#) to flip, conceal, and sometimes straight-up scrub their previous positions on the issue. Many [candidates](#) have even [tried](#) to convince voters that they have [no power](#) over abortion access.
- Anti-abortion candidates have gone [above](#) and [beyond](#) to [mislead](#) and keep their views from voters for one simple reason: they know voters reject their out-of-touch views.

“I do believe it’s caught [anti-abortion candidates] slightly off guard with just how bad an issue this is for them,” said Sarah Longwell, an anti-Trump Republican strategist who leads focus groups. “The party has opted for changing the conversation entirely because abortion is just bad terrain for them.” [New York Times, 10/12/22]

The “Abortion vs. Economy” Debate is a False Choice

- Asking voters to “choose” between the economy and abortion is a false choice and the wrong question to ask. Voters understand that the ability to control our economic security is inextricably linked to our ability to decide whether and when to become a parent. People don’t live single-issue lives, nor are there any candidates running single-issue campaigns.
- That’s why candidates across the country are talking about the things that matter most to voters: yes, 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.
- Anti-abortion candidates want to take our freedoms away and make health care decisions for us. Yet, their policy agendas abandon families by refusing to fund vital services like child care and maternal care, leaving them living in poverty and letting children grow up disadvantaged.
- The same extremists in Congress who support a national abortion ban have also voted against protecting access to birth control, against the Child Tax Credit, and against the Inflation Reduction Act. These issues are all about power and control: over our bodies, our economic opportunities, our right to control our own lives.

Takeaways

While this election remains too close to call, there is no doubt that abortion restrictions have a major economic and social impact on voters and abortion rights have been a motivating factor in 2022. Voters do not want politicians interfering in their freedom to make their own health care decisions, and that will be on top of mind as they head to the polls. While voters are dealing with

many issues, in their lives and in the barrage of messaging from campaigns, the erosion of our abortion rights has certainly shifted the ground of this election.