

Reproductive Rights Historical Highlights

FORWARD PROGRESS:

1965 — *Griswold v. Connecticut*

The Supreme Court nullified a Connecticut statute prohibiting the use of birth control by married persons, arguing that the right to marital privacy protects the access of married couples to contraceptives.

1972 — *Eisenstadt v. Baird*

The Court struck down a law prohibiting the distribution of birth control to unmarried adults.

1973 — *Roe v. Wade*

By a vote of 7-2, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against a Texas law prohibiting abortions not necessary to save the woman's life, extending the fundamental right to privacy to a woman's decision to choose abortion.

1976 — *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth*

The Court ruled against a Missouri statute that would force a married woman to obtain her husband's approval before getting an abortion and ruled against a written parental consent requirement for minors.

THE BACKLASH & THE RESPONSE:

1977 — *Maher v. Roe*

The Supreme Court upheld a Connecticut ban on public funding for abortions, with the exception of abortions that were "medically necessary."

1980 — *Harris v. McRae*

The Supreme Court upheld the Hyde amendment, which prohibits the federal Medicaid funding of abortions not necessary to preserve the woman's life.

1989 — *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*

The court upheld a Missouri law prohibiting the use of public employees and public facilities for the purpose of performing abortions that were not medically necessary.

1992 — *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*

The Supreme Court, while refusing to overturn *Roe*, nevertheless upheld a laundry list of abortion restrictions (parental consent, anti-abortion counseling, and a waiting period) only invalidating spousal notification.

1994 — Congress enacts the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act.

1994 — *NOW v. Scheidler*

The Supreme Court affirmed NOW's right to use federal anti-racketeering laws against anti-abortion terrorists who organize others to use fear, force and violence to shut down women's health clinics where abortions are performed. The Court is now reviewing the nationwide injunction we won in 1999, which was upheld by the 4th Circuit.

2000 — The FDA approves mifepristone (RU-486), following a 16-year struggle by reproductive rights activists to have the safe and effective abortion drug approved. Opponents made repeated efforts to prevent approval and distribution of mifepristone and are continuing efforts through a petition to the FDA to have the drug withdrawn.

2001 — The Bush administration reinstates the global "gag" rule that was first adopted in 1984 by the Reagan administration and later lifted when President Clinton came into office. The "gag" rule is an anti-free speech and anti-democratic policy which has caused 430 organizations in 50 countries to stop performing abortions or speaking about abortion laws in order to qualify for U.S. funding. Over 80,000 women around the world die each year from unsafe and illegal abortions and hundreds of thousands suffer complications from unsafe abortions.

2002 — The Bush administration tries to install a right wing, religious ideologue, who has led efforts to get the FDA to reverse approval of mifepristone, as head of the FDA's Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee.

2003 — Congress passes and Bush signs the so-called "Partial Birth" Abortion Ban—the first federal ban on an abortion procedure since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973. Bush signs the bill, which does not include an exception to preserve a woman's health, while surrounded by a group of smiling men.

2004 — The House of Representatives passes the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2003, which would for the first time establish in federal law a fetus as a legal "person," with individual rights separate from those of the pregnant woman.

Compiled from: [Center for Reproductive Law and Policy](#), [NARAL Supreme Court Decisions Concerning Reproductive Rights](#), [NOW Archives](#), [Planned Parenthood *Roe v. Wade* Timeline](#)