

Unit 5

Reproductive Choices: Mobilize the Pro-Choice Majority

Support for abortion rights in the United States has been remarkably consistent over the past two decades. While there is substantial debate over the best methodology for measuring public opinion on abortion rights (Cook 1993; Blendon 1993; Adamek 1994), almost every survey – regardless of the questions asked – finds more people in favor of abortion rights than opposed.

Support for abortion rights is across the board, with the majority of women and men, Democrats and Republicans, and every age and racial group believing women should have the right to decide whether or not to terminate a pregnancy. The public also strongly condemns anti-abortion violence, and supports mifepristone (RU 486).

In all of the polls, the most significant changes in attitudes have followed U.S. Supreme Court decisions, high levels of pro-choice activity and visibility, and presidential politics. The greatest increases in support for abortion rights occurred after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* and *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* decisions. In the case of *Roe v. Wade*, the legalization of abortion in 1973 galvanized support for this right. The 1989 *Webster* decision opened the door to state abortion restrictions and demonstrated the fragility of the Supreme Court support for abortion rights. The decision mobilized feminist movement activities in support of abortion, consequently spurring a substantial increase in abortion rights support. In the face of direct threats to legal abortion, public opinion rallies behind the pro-choice position.

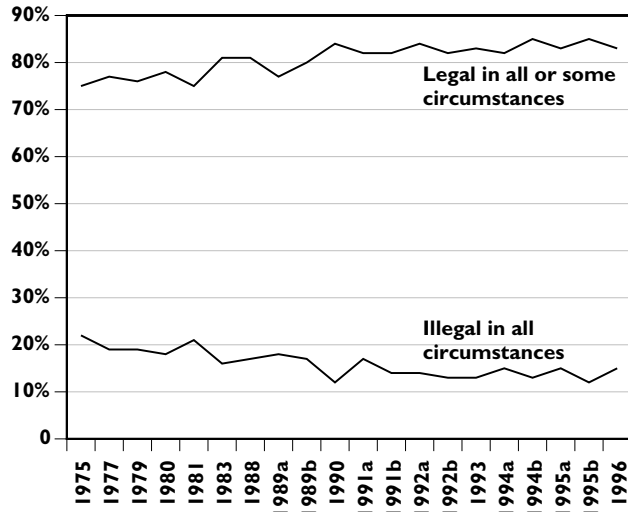
Support for Abortion Rights Over the Past 25 Years

Major polling organizations, including Gallup, Harris, and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), have measured public opinion on the abortion issue for close to 25 years. **Gallup polls have shown continuity in support for legal abortion since 1975.** For the past thirty years, Gallup has asked respondents “Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances.” When those who believe abortion should be legal in all circumstances are combined with those who support legal abortion in some circumstances, high public support for legal abortion becomes

clear. In 1975, 75% believed that abortion should be legal in all or certain circumstances; 76% expressed this opinion in 2002 (Chart 1).

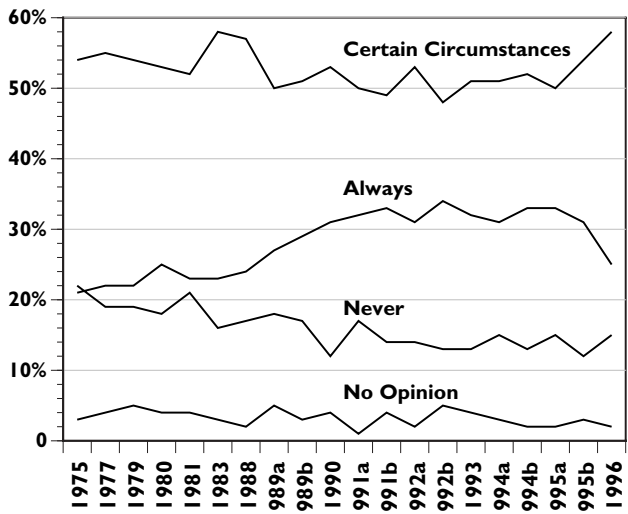
While support for legal abortion has remained very stable for the past two decades as seen above, some decline has occurred since the early 1990s. An increasingly larger proportion of the public believes that abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances. According to Gallup data, levels of support for abortion “under any circumstances” climbed from 21% in the first year of polling to a peak of 34% in June of 1992. Since 1992, decreases in support for legal abortion under all circumstances have been matched by increases in support for legal abortion under certain circumstances. This pattern

Chart 1 ■ Public Opinion on Legality of Abortion Stable For Two Decades.*



Source: Gallup, 1975-1978 (Moore 1975-1996).

Chart 2 ■ Large Portion of Public Believes Abortion Should Be Legal Only Under Certain Circumstances.*



Source: Gallup, 1975-1978 (Moore 1975-1996).

*Two years indicates two points of data collection taken in that year.

is revealed when the Gallup data are disaggregated into those who support legal abortion unequivocally and those whose support is conditional (Chart 2).

The percentage of the public that feels abortion should be “illegal in all circumstances” reached a high of 22% in 1975 and 2002 and a low of 12% in 1990, immediately after the *Webster* decision.

According to Gallup’s March 2002 polling, 27% support abortion under any circumstances, 53% under certain circumstances, and 19% believe abortion should be illegal in all circumstances (Saad 2002).

Several factors have contributed to this erosion in pro-choice support during the 1990s. Anti-abortion forces have waged expensive television advertising campaigns to undermine pro-choice support. The absence of a direct and visible threat to abortion rights combined with the apologetic presentation of the abortion issue by some abortion proponents have allowed the messages of the slick DeMoss “Life: What A Beautiful Choice” ads to go largely unchallenged. Pollsters estimate that in the areas in which the DeMoss ads have been shown regularly on television the pro-choice position has lost about 5% in the polls.

Unaware of the severe implications that restricting abortion access has on women’s lives and women’s health, the public tends to initially support abortion restrictions. A 1996 Gallup survey found that 74% of respondents supported 24-hour waiting periods, 74% favored parental consent, and 70% favored spousal notification, but only 38% favored a constitutional ban. With basic education, this initial support for restrictions can be shifted to opposition to measures which deny women abortion access. For example, in 1990, abortion rights advocates soundly defeated a parental consent measure on the Oregon ballot that initially had strong public support. In July of 1990, 62% to 25% supported the measure. However, once the public learned that similar abortion restrictions in other states had cost young women their lives,



support turned to opposition and the measure lost by a margin of 48% to 52%. Public support for abortion rights has been shown to be very responsive to education campaigns, U.S. Supreme Court decisions threatening abortion rights, and pro-choice mobilizations such as marches and rallies.

Polling results on the abortion issue also are affected by the wording of survey questions (Cook 1993; Blendon 1993). When the abortion issue is framed without equivocation, respondents are even more strongly supportive of abortion rights. A 2000 Hart and Teeter poll, conducted for NBC News and the Wall Street Journal, showed that 57% of the public felt that “the choice of abortion should be left up to the woman and her doctor.” The 2003 Survey on Women, Men and Feminism, conducted by the Peter Harris Research Group for the Feminist Majority Foundation/Ms. Magazine, found that 73% favored a “woman in this country having the choice to have an abortion with the advice of her doctor.” The 2002 Gallup poll found that between 59-69% of the public supported a women’s right to abortion when a medical doctor was involved with the decision making process. The poll also found that support for abortion rights exists across gender, racial, age, geographic, and ideological lines (see Chart 3).

Public support for abortion rights is also strongest when poll respondents are faced with the possible overturn of *Roe v. Wade* or a constitutional amendment that would ban abortion. The National Women’s Equality Poll revealed that 74% opposed “an amendment to the Constitution which would outlaw all abortions.” An October 2000 Gallup poll found that 67% of respondents would oppose a constitutional amendment overturning the *Roe v. Wade* decision and making abortion illegal

Chart 3 ■ Support for Abortion Rights Solid Across All Demographic Groups

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
Total	73%	24%	4%
East	77%	17%	6%
Midwest	71%	26%	4%
South	70%	26%	4%
West	75%	23%	2%
Women	72%	25%	3%
Men	74%	22%	4%
18-29	70%	28%	2%
30-49	73%	24%	3%
50-64	79%	18%	3%
65 or Older	70%	21%	9%
White	72%	23%	5%
Black	73%	24%	3%
Latino	73%	27%	—

Source: 2003 Survey on Women, Men and Feminism (Peter Harris Research Group)

in all states. Only 30% of those polled favored such an amendment. In March 2002, a Gallup poll showed that 60% of respondents said that they would not like “to see a Supreme Court completely overturn *Roe v. Wade*.”

In a 2000 Gallup poll respondents were asked if, given the opportunity, they would vote “for or against a constitutional amendment that would overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision, and make abortion illegal in all state.” Only 30% of those polled favored such an amendment, while 67% opposed it.

Support for medical methods of abortion is also strong. The public strongly supports mifepristone, also known as RU 486, the French abortion pill, which is a safe and effective method of early abortion. According to the National Women’s Equality Poll, 66% of respondents favored “all women being given the choice to use RU 486.” Support for mifepristone was greatest among young people, as 71% of people ages 18-29 favored its availability. In an October 2000 Gallup poll, 50% favored the FDA’s September 2000 approval of RU-486 while 44% opposed it. An October 2000 Hart and Teeter poll found that 46% favored FDA approval and 38% were opposed.

Why the Public Supports Abortion Rights

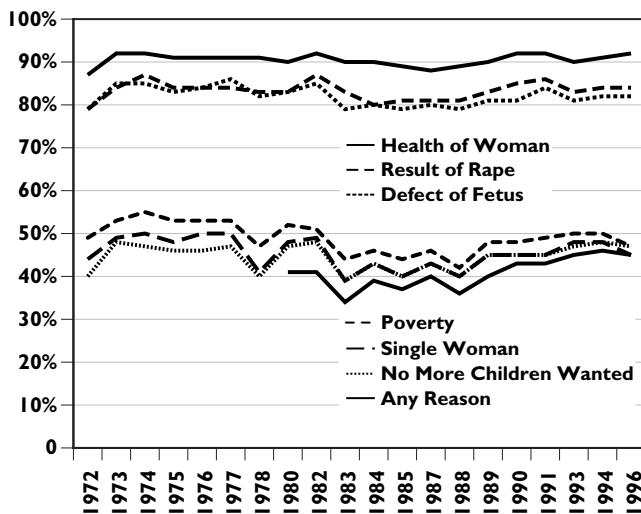
Polling data also makes clear which abortion rights arguments are most compelling to the public.

Since 1965, the National Opinion Research Center has asked a series of questions probing under what conditions should women be able to obtain an abortion. **Support for abortion rights is greatest if the woman’s own health is endangered, if the pregnancy is the result of rape, or if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby** (see Chart 4).

Consistently, over 90% support abortion for these medical reasons – if a woman’s health is in jeopardy, with only slightly less supporting abortion rights in the case of rape or fetal defect. Since 1972, over forty percent support abortion rights for “social reasons” such as when a family cannot afford more children, when a woman is single, and when a woman does not want any more children. Only in 1977 did NORC add a question measuring support for a woman’s right to choose an abortion for any reason. This unconditional support for abortion rights has climbed to almost 45% over the years.

In addition to its firm support for abortion rights when a woman’s health is in jeopardy, **the public also fears a return to back alley abortions.** A 1985 Gallup poll showed that 88% of respondents believed that “if abortions were made illegal ... many women would break the law by getting illegal abortions,” and 87% said “many women would be physically harmed in abortions performed by unqualified people” (NOW LDEF 1987, 15). A 1991 Hickman-Brown Research poll found that 82% of respondents thought it either “very likely” (55%) or “somewhat likely” (27%) that the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* would result in the numbers of women who die from illegal abortions increasing. In 1990, Oregon parental notification and abortion ban ballot measures were soundly defeated by the *No on 8 and 10 Campaign* theme of “No Going Back to Back Alley Abortions.” This theme was highlighted by campaign adver-

Chart 4 ■ Support for Legal Abortion Based on Reason for Abortion. (Percentages are of respondents who replied that abortion should be legal under the condition specified. Those who replied that they did not know or who declined to participate are excluded from the data analysis.)



Source: National Opinion Research Center, 1972 - 1996.

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tising and events featuring Bill and Karen Bell, whose teenage daughter, Becky, died as a result of an illegal abortion which she was forced to seek because of Indiana's parental consent law. When the public is made aware of the tragic consequences of abortion restrictions, they overwhelmingly oppose limitations on abortion access.

Public Opposes Clinic Violence

The public is also outraged by clinic violence. Polling conducted in the midst of the mid-1980s wave of clinic bombings showed strong opposition to the use of violence in the abortion debate. A 1985 Harris survey found that 81% agree that "It is not the American way to resort to violence when you disagree with a national policy." Eighty-five percent of people in a 1985 ABC/*Washington Post* survey characterized anti-abortion bombings as criminal acts rather than acts of civil disobedience (NOW LDEF 1987, 19). And, 76% of those polled by CBS/*New York Times* believed that "There's absolutely no excuse for these bombings, they are the same thing as terrorism" (NOW LDEF 1987, 19). The 1991-1992 Women of Color Reproductive Health Poll found that 85% of African American women responded "no" when asked if they "think people have the right to stop women from entering abortion clinics?" (Winters Group 1991).

Again, with the murders, shootings, and bombings in the early 1990s, public opposition to clinic violence soared, as did support for legal intervention to end clinic violence. In 1993, after the murder of Dr. David Gunn, the public favored a federal law to make blocking or attacking a clinic a crime by a margin of 63% to 30% (Blendon 1993, 2873). The National Women's Equality Poll found that 94% of respondents disagree with the position that

the "use of violence, even murder, is justified to save the life of one unborn child." Seventy-six percent support the Justice Department sending marshals and taking other actions to protect physicians and clinic staff from anti-abortion violence. **Pollster Lou Harris (1995) argues that clinic violence has created a backlash against the anti-abortion movement in the American public, fueling support for abortion rights.** Young women in focus groups, conducted by MacWilliams Cosgrove (1997) for the Pro-choice Education Project, were angered by anti-abortion violence. These women feel vulnerable to anti-abortion attacks, according to MacWilliams Cosgrove.

The Gender Gap and Support for Abortion Rights

On the surface, polls show little difference between women and men in their support for abortion rights. However, gender gaps are revealed when differences in education, methodological nuances, and intensity of opinion are analyzed.

Women feel more intensely than men about the abortion issue (Smeal 1984). The May 2001 Gallup poll noted a gender gap among the strongest abortion supporters. Twenty-eight percent of women supported legal abortion under any circumstances, with only 23% of men holding this view (Saad 2002). This gender gap also is reflected in the priority women place on the abortion issue in choosing political candidates. In the 1995 National Women's Equality Poll, pro-choice women were more likely than pro-choice men to tie their vote to the abortion issue. Eighteen percent of pro-choice women would certainly vote against a candidate solely because of their abortion stand, compared with 13% of men.

An even more significant gender gap on the abortion issue appears when education is taken into account. **With each increase in educational attainment, women’s support for abortion rights increases, while men’s support for abortion rights remains fairly stable at all educational levels.** The 1996 Gallup data show that women who have completed four years of college have the highest level of support for abortion rights – 73% were pro-choice. Women who have attended some college but less than four years were pro-choice by a margin of 59%. Of women high school graduates, only 37% were pro-choice. Conversely, men’s attitudes on abortion remain stable regardless of educational attainment. Reporting on these data, Moore et al (1996) conclude, “The poll results suggest that while attendance at college has little influence on men’s attitudes about abortion, for women college experience is a major – even revolutionary – influence.”

In addition, methodological flaws in data collection may further hide the gender gap in opinion on abortion rights. Persistent “lie factors” create the illusion of support for abortion rights among male voters. **Polling data have documented that male respondents are more likely to state support for a women’s rights position when responding to female interviewers than when responding to male interviewers or when voting.**

For example, polls in Oregon during 1990 abortion ballot measure contests initially showed little difference between male and female attitudes on parental notification restrictions. In a July 1990 poll, 38% of female respondents and 35% of male respondents supported “a minor’s right to choose an abortion.” However, when the sex of the interviewer was taken into account, male support for abortion

rights diminished. In the July 1990 poll, 41% of male respondents told female interviewers that they favored a minor’s access to abortion, with 12% saying they were unsure and 46% indicating their opposition. Support among male respondents dropped to 29% when the question was posed to male respondents by male interviewers, with 24% not sure and 46% opposed. Similarly, the poll found that 35% of male voters told female interviewers that they would support a second measure that would ban most abortions. The percentage of male voters supporting this measure increased to 43% if a male asked the question.

Studies have found that responses to male interviewers more accurately reflect how male voters actually will vote in the voting booth. While females are less likely to state support for women’s rights issues to male interviewers, their “lie factor” is usually smaller and less likely to affect polling results because of the small number of male interviewers. Unfortunately, the lie factor cannot be analyzed in most polls because too few male interviewers are used and because data analyses correlating the sex of the interviewer with the sex of the respondent are generally not performed.

Women of color strongly support abortion rights. According to the 1991 Women of Color Reproductive Health Poll, 83% of African American woman, 81% of Asian women, 80% of Native American Women and 55% of Latina women agreed with the statement “The decision to have or not have an abortion is one that every woman must make for herself.” Other studies that control for religious variables have found that African American women are even more supportive of abortion rights than white women, but that African American men are less supportive than white men (Wilcox 1990).

Age and Support for Abortion Rights

Some disagreement exists over the level of support for abortion rights among young people. Some analysts have reported declines in support for abortion rights over the past few years. Data from focus groups conducted by MacWilliams Cosgrove (1997) suggest that young people today take abortion rights for granted, do not perceive a threat to abortion rights, and are concerned that too many in their age group engage in unprotected sex. Moreover, MacWilliams Cosgrove believe that anti-abortion violence has deterred young women from becoming pro-choice activists. However, other data show that trends in support for abortion among young people actually mirror support patterns among other age groups. Some data show that young people, particularly young women, are among the most dependable pro-choice allies.

Like other age groups, support for abortion rights among young people increased following the *Webster* decision and remained high in the early 1990s, declining some since 1995. Without strong media campaigns and grassroots visibility to counter anti-abortion efforts, pro-choice support among young people – as well as among other age groups – has appeared to decline. UCLA's annual survey of entering first year students confirms this trend. In 1977, 55.7% of first year students supported the statement that "abortion should be legal." Support climbed to 65.5% in 1989 in the wake of the *Webster* decision. Support declined to 50.9% in 1998. However, beginning in 1999, the UCLA survey shows steady increases in support for abortion rights. In 1999, 53.2% of first year students favored legal abortion, and, in 2000, 53.9% held this view. Abortion rights support grew to 53.9% in 2000 and to 55% in the 2001 survey (UCLA). Bush Adminis-

tration threats to legal abortion may be responsible for increases in abortion rights support among young people.

With education projects such as the *Choices* campaign, we can continue to raise support for abortion rights among young people to high levels. Prior pro-choice campaigns in which educational programs were directed at young people have made a difference.

In Oregon in 1990, a concerted campus campaign successfully educated and mobilized young voters to oppose anti-abortion ballot measures. The pro-choice campaign's strong and unequivocal "No Going Back to Back Alleys" campaign message was credited in large part with the defeat of the parental notification measure. **The campaign that defeated a Oregon parental notification ballot measure in the 1990 demonstrated that young people were in fact the most responsive age group to educational campaigns.** In July of 1990, polls showed that by a margin of 61% to 28%, respondents ages 18-25 supported the proposed parental notification measure. **A post-election poll documented a 43 point shift from support for the parental notification measure to opposition, with 18-25-year-olds opposed to the measure by 71%-29%.** As Chart 6 illustrates, movement to the pro-choice position on this ballot measure was most significant among young people.

In 1998, young voters were the strongest opponents of an abortion ban on the Washington State ballot. The ban was defeated by a margin of 57% to 43%. However, 64% of voters between the ages of 18-29 voted against the measure.

Many national polls show that the two age groups that demonstrate the strongest support for abortion rights in most polls are 18-29 year olds and 30-49 year olds. Conversely, older people – those over age 65 – favor legal abortion less

Chart 5 ■ Young People Turned Against Parental Notification Ballot Measure in 1990 Oregon Election.

Age	July 1990				November 1990			% Shift to No
	Yes	No	DK		Yes	No	DK	
18-25	61%	28%	11%		29%	71%	0%	43 points
26-35	62%	26%	12%		42%	56%	2%	30 points
36-45	56%	29%	15%		41%	58%	1%	29 points
46-55	68%	22%	10%		43%	55%	2%	33 points
56-65	56%	31%	13%		50%	50%	0%	19 points
Over 65	71%	18%	11%		50%	48%	2%	30 points

Source: Opinion Dynamics, July 1990 and November 1990.

strongly. A July 1996 Gallup Poll showed support for abortion rights was strongest among younger people, with 29% believing abortion should be legal under any circumstances, compared with 27% of 30-49, 26% of 50-64, and 17% of those age 65 and over. When those supporting abortion rights under any circumstances and those supporting abortion rights under certain circumstances are combined, 82% of 18-29, 86% of 30-49, 80% of 60-64, and 80% of those over age 65 support legal abortion.

On almost every abortion variable in the NORC data, those in the 30-49 age group consistently have the strongest abortion rights stands. Only on the rape variable – where respondents are asked whether they believe abortion should be legal if the woman has been raped – did support in the 18-29 age group exceed that of the 30-49 age group. Results from the Mac-Williams Cosgrove (1997) focus groups suggest that young women’s support for abortion rights and activism to preserve legal abortion increases when the

abortion issue is placed in a broader context of “choice” that includes safe sex, birth control and sex education. Moreover, in the 2003 Survey of Women, Men and Feminism, conducted by Peter Harris, 76% of women aged 18 to 29 strongly favored a woman’s right to an abortion with the advice of her doctor.

The Abortion Issue in the Voting Booth

In addition to enjoying a numerical advantage in the electorate, pro-choice voters are more likely to make abortion rights a priority in their voting decisions. Pollster Lou Harris pioneered the polling technique used to measure how important a candidate’s abortion position is to respondent voting decisions. In the National Women’s Equality Poll, for example, respondents were asked “if you found a candidate for president whose views you mostly agreed with [and] the same candidate took a position on a woman’s choice on abortion that you disagreed with com-



pletely, would you certainly not vote for that candidate, probably not vote for that candidate, or would you still vote for that candidate?”

Harris finds that abortion rights supporters are more likely than abortion opponents to choose candidates based on the abortion issue. In the 1995 National Women’s Equality Poll, Harris found that 17% of voters are certain that they would shift votes away from a candidate with whom they disagreed on the abortion issue. Over two-thirds of those who would condition their vote solely on a candidate’s abortion position are pro-choice.

A Gannett poll, conducted in July of 1996 by Opinion Research Corporation, found that 33% of voters rated abortion as a “very important” issue in candidate selection, with another 37% saying the issue is “somewhat important.” Again, a substantial gender gap appeared with 38% of women saying abortion was “very important,” compared with 29% of men.

Another way to examine public opinion on abortion is to look at state referenda and initiative votes on this issue. When voters actually have a chance to vote on abortion policy, they reject abortion restrictions. Votes on statewide abortion referenda and initiatives make clear fundamental support for abortion rights among the electorate. **Pro-choice forces have prevailed on 19 out of the 26 abortion-related initiatives or referenda that have appeared on state election ballots since 1970** (Jackman 1994, 2002). State electorates rejected 15 out of 18 restrictive anti-abortion measures (Chart 6).

Pre-*Roe* state referenda and initiatives were an early strategy to legalize

Chart 6 ■ Abortion Rights Groups Have Prevailed in 19 out of 26 State Abortion Ballot Measure Contests (Jackman 2002)

Year	State	Anti-Abortion Measures		Pro-Choice Measures	
		Vote For	Vote Against	Vote For	Vote Against
1970	WA			56%	44%
1972	ND			23%	77%
	MI			40%	60%
1978	OR	49%	51%		
1982	AK	41%	59%		
1984	WA	47%	53%		
	CO	50%	49%		
1986	OR	45%	55%		
	MA	42%	58%		
	RI	35%	65%		
	AR	49%	50%		
1988	AR	52%	48%		
	MI			43%	57%
	CO			40%	60%
1990	OR				
	#8	33%	67%		
	#10	48%	52%		
	NY			61%	49%
1991	WA			51%	49%
1992	AZ	31%	69%		
	MD			61%	39%
1994	WY	40%	60%		
1998	WA	43%	57%		
	CO	55%	45%		
	CO	49%	51%		
1999	ME	44%	56%		
2000	CO	39%	61%		

abortion. In 1970, Washington state voters legalized abortion for the first seventeen weeks of pregnancy by a referendum vote. But ballot measures that would have improved abortion access in North Dakota and Michigan were defeated in 1972 by large margins.

In the wake of U.S. Supreme Court decisions and Congressional votes eliminating federal funding for abortions, anti-abortion forces proposed a number of state ballot measures to end the use of state funds for abortion and to place additional restrictions on abortion access. Abortion rights lawsuits delayed some measures, and prevented many others from ever reaching the ballot. Of those measures actually put before voters, anti-abortion forces succeeded in directly eliminating abortion funding only in Colorado in 1984, and only by a margin of

1%. Ballot measures to cut off state funding were defeated in Oregon (1978 and 1986), Alaska (1982), Washington (1984), and Massachusetts (1986). In 1986, Rhode Island voters overwhelmingly defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would have granted personhood to fetuses from fertilization to birth and prevented future use of state funds for abortion. By a narrow margin, Arkansas voters in 1986 rejected an amendment to the state constitution defining a fetus as a person from conception to birth and banning direct and indirect state funding for abortion; however, a similar measure that excluded public funding of birth control from the ban passed in Arkansas in 1988.

Emboldened by these victories over anti-abortion ballot measures and frightened by the continued erosion of federal

judicial protection for abortion rights, pro-choice activists turned to the ballot measure strategy in 1988 to restore state funding for abortion in Colorado and Michigan. In Colorado, abortion supporters attempted to amend their state constitution to restore abortion funding after their 1984 loss. In Michigan, abortion rights supporters proposed a ballot measure to restore state-funded abortions after legislation passed

Chart 7 ■ Public Favors Movements in Support of Women’s Right to Abortion.

	All	Women	Men	Women 18-29	Women 30-49	Women 50-64	Women 65 & up
Women’s Movement	69%	72%	67%	82%	72%	67%	63%
Movement to Strengthen Women’s Rights	71%	76%	76%	83%	76%	75%	71%
The Feminist Movement	51%	57%	45%	68%	59%	52%	45%
The Pro-Choice Movement	58%	61%	55%	69%	64%	53%	53%
Anti-abortion Movement	38%	36%	39%	39%	38%	34%	32%
The Right to Life Movement	57%	55%	60%	54%	58%	48%	55%

Source: 1995 National Women’s Equality Poll (Harris 1995).

ending funding except to save the life of the woman. However, both of these proactive measures failed by wide margins.

The 1989 *Webster* decision upholding a Missouri law that prohibited the use of public facilities for abortions and required physicians to perform fetal viability testing spurred ballot measures from both sides of the abortion debate. Ballot measures guaranteeing abortion rights were placed on the ballot in Nevada (1990), Washington State (1991), and Maryland (1992). Abortion rights advocates won all three campaigns. Post-*Webster* anti-abortion measures were placed on the ballot in Oregon in 1990 and Arizona in 1992. Voters in Oregon rejected both a parental notification measure and a ban that would have allowed abortions only to prevent the death of the mother and in cases of reported rape or incest. Abortion rights supporters in Arizona defeated a similar ban two years later.

Between 1994 and 2000, six more anti-abortion measures appeared on state ballots; five of the six were defeated. In Wyoming, a measure that would have banned almost all abortion and possibly some forms of birth control was defeated 60% to 40%. In Colorado and Washington State in 1998 and in Maine in 1999, abortion opponents proposed measures to ban late term abortion; voters in all three states rejected these measures. However, in Colorado, voters did approve a parental notification measure that also appeared on the state's 1998 ballot. But, in 2000, Colorado voters rejected a measure that would have instituted a 24-hour waiting period and other restrictions on abortion.

Women's Rights and Reproductive Rights

Support for abortion rights and women's rights go hand in hand, especially for young women. **The public in general and women in particular are more favorable toward movements to strengthen women's rights, including reproductive rights, than movements to restrict abortion rights.** The 1995 National Women's Equality Poll provides extensive data about public perception of both sides of the abortion issue. Of the respondents in the survey, 69% expressed very or mostly favorable feelings toward the "women's movement," 71% towards the "movement to strengthen women's rights," 51% towards "the feminist movement," and 58% towards the "pro-choice movement." In contrast, only 38% said they had very or mostly favorable feelings toward the "anti-abortion movement;" when the term "right to life movement" was used favorable ratings grew to 57% (Chart 8).

Women are more favorable toward everything involving feminism than men. And young women are the most favorable of all. Women between the ages of 18-29 have a more favorable opinion of the "women's movement," "movement to strengthen women's rights," "feminist movement," and "pro-choice movement" than any other age group and more favorable than their male peers. Women's rights were second only to AIDS as the issue about which young women were most concerned personally in the Harrison Hickman January 1998 poll. Forty-six percent of young women called women's rights their "very biggest concern."



Make Your Move!

Rock For Choice™ Concert

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1991, L7 and the Feminist Majority Foundation organized the first Rock For Choice™ concert to rally the music industry in support of abortion rights and women's health clinics. The Los Angeles concert included sets with Nirvana, Hole, and Sister Double Happiness.

Rock For Choice™ concerts, now a national project of the Feminist Majority, have been hosted by grassroots organizers in dozens of cities across the U.S. and in Canada. All money raised at Rock for Choice™ concerts goes directly towards the Feminist Majority Foundation's National Clinic Access Project. Founded in 1991, the National Clinic Access Project provides clinics nationwide with security assessments, security guards, pro-bono legal assistance, video surveillance systems, and other assistance to protect clinics and clinic workers from anti-abortion extremists. Hosting a Rock for Choice™ concert is a great opportunity to raise money for an important cause, put on a great show, and get the pro-choice message out!

PEOPLE POWER AND COMMITTEES

To make this project more manageable, you must have at least 8 people to split into different committees. One committee can handle the finances; a second can coordinate the logistics; and the third can organize publicity. Other committees might include performers committee, press committee, and recruitment committee.

Financial Committee: This committee will make a budget, allocate funds to each of the other committees as needed, and negotiate all contracts with the bands and the venue.

Logistics Committee: This committee will choose a venue and the bands for the event. Members of this committee will secure all equipment, staff for the night of the event, and all programming details.

Publicity Committee: Publicity for this event is extremely important! Members of the Publicity Committee will design, reproduce, and distribute all flyers, posters, banners, and ads. Unlike some of the smaller actions, a Rock For Choice™ concert involves a considerable amount of off-campus publicity. This committee will also work closely with the band(s) in designing and distributing flyers, posters, and leaflets.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

You will need:

- Local pro-choice bands who can play a benefit show.
- Technical equipment (sound and lights) for the concert. Make sure to find out exactly what the band needs and has in terms of this equipment.
- A room/hall for 100-350 people, depending on the size of your expected audience.
- Literature on reproductive rights for an informational table (contact FMF for this).
- Flyers, posters, and banners for advertisements.
- Printed tickets and professional posters



- Materials from the FMF’s Los Angeles office, including merchandise and camera-ready art for flyers and posters.

TIMELINE

You will need at least two months to coordinate this action, as band and venue reservations must be coordinated well ahead of time. See the timeline chart that follows for further details broken down by committee.

BUDGET

A Rock For Choice™ show can require a substantial initial investment. Large concert spaces often require deposits upon reservation, and bands may require travel expenses. Other substantial costs will come from advertising, posters, and ticket printing. Remember, since this is a fund-raiser, you will make back your initial investment and donate the rest of the proceeds to FMF’s Clinic Access Project.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

First, pick a date!

9-10 weeks

- If organizing event on campus, secure space for event. If you are organizing the event off-campus, begin to investigate local clubs where you could hold the show. Always visit the venue before deciding to book it. Make sure to find an appropriately sized space for your expected crowd.
- Begin investigating and deciding on a band(s) for the show.

7-8 weeks

- Start investigating equipment needs. Ask the band(s) what they need. If working on campus, get in touch with your media center and explain your needs. Reserve the necessary equipment for the show, and hire technical help to set up and test it the evening of the show.
- Talk with other pro-choice groups on campus and invite them to co-sponsor the event.

5-6 weeks

- Start to identify potential volunteers and begin to recruit. You will need people to help with set up, clean up, selling merchandise, collecting tickets and money, and serving refreshments.
- Assign a stage manager as well as a light and sound manager. The stage manager should be

PUBLICITY

9-10 weeks

- Begin to plan your publicity strategy, including poster designs and tickets.

7-8 weeks

- Call the Feminist Majority Foundation’s LA office at (310) 556-2500. Tell them that your Leadership Alliance is hosting a Rock For Choice™ show. Ask them to mail you Rock For Choice™ merchandise to sell at the event. They can also provide camera-ready artwork for advertising!

- Order professional posters which include band logos and the Rock for Choice™ logo. Also order tickets.

5-6 weeks

- At this point, publicity should begin. Make eye-catching flyers noting the date, time, bands, and purpose for the event. Also include contact numbers for advance purchase tickets and more information.

- Put flyers up everywhere on campus and in the community, and continue to put new ones up each week.

3-4 weeks

- Write editorials for your school and local community paper about the event.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

responsible for getting the bands on stage, overseeing volunteer staff, and organizing pro-choice announcements between sets.

3-4 weeks

- Confirm with the bands and the venue. Make sure you confirm their time, date, and all of the details. Make specific meeting plans with the band. Give them directions, and have a back-up plan in case of an emergency.

2 weeks

- Train volunteers on their general tasks.
- Begin to sell advance tickets for the show (designate two people to keep records on tickets sold).

1 week

- Do a walk-through of the site with your volunteer staff. Have a rough schedule of events, and try to trouble-shoot. Make sure you have arranged for everything you will need.

- Double check equipment rental details.

2-3 days

- If you are planning on selling refreshments, purchase them.

The day of the concert!

- Meet with all volunteers two hours before the show. Give them a copy of the concert schedule, and make sure they understand their responsibilities. Do a brief run-through.
- Set up all tables for tickets, information, etc., and take away/add chairs. Help set up equipment. Make sure it is tested well in advance in case there are any glitches!

During the concert

- Coordinate announcements throughout the show on issues of clinic violence and the pro-choice message. Ask the bands to give a brief statement on choice during their set.

After the concert

- After figuring out the total amount you have raised, pay off all remaining bills. Always collect receipts.
- Send the proceeds and unused merchandise to the FM Los Angeles office.
- Make sure to take the time to de-brief your group on the show. What went well and what didn't?

PUBLICITY

- Secure a journalist to do an advance/cover story on the event.

2 weeks

- Increase the intensity of your publicity drive. Double your flyering efforts.
- Announce the show in classes, at Student Government meetings, and in the newspaper.
- Ask local radio stations to do a public service announcement for the show.

1 week

- Create a large banner to hang in a high traffic area advertising the event.
- Go out into the local community to restaurants, bars, coffeehouses, gyms, community centers, etc. and put up bright flyers and quality posters.
- Continue the public service radio announcements.

- Send a press statement to campus and community press (see appendices for the how-to).

2-3 days

- Keep visibility going strong! It should peak the day before or the day of the event.

The day of the concert!

- Last push for publicity! Do a chalk talk.
- Help with set-up; decorate the space with flyers and posters.
- Put a Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance banner on stage.

During the concert

- Use this concert as a way to get people interested in joining the Leadership Alliance. Get new recruits and announce your usual meeting times.

After the concert

- After you have done all of the clean-up, hold a thank-you party for the volunteer crew.
- Make sure to write thank-you notes to the bands and to others who donated time and resources to help with the event.
- Do a follow up story with your campus paper. Include some photos and the amount raised for the FMF Clinic Access Project.

PUBLICITY

The success of your Rock For Choice™ show depends on how well you get the word out. Publicity is vital in turning out a large crowd. Make sure to dedicate the time and resources necessary for a strong, extensive publicity drive. See the publicity appendix for details. Some additional ideas include:

- Contacting the music writers from your school and local press to cover the bands and the event in advance.
- Inquiring about free public service announcements with campus and local radio stations.
- Having some professional, high quality posters printed to advertise the event. Use the band's logo on these posters as well as the Feminist Majority Foundation name, and the Rock for Choice™ logo.
- Having the band suggest good places to advertise in the community for the event, as they know their audience best.

SOME HELPFUL HINTS

- When choosing a venue, it is better to underestimate than overestimate! Keep the following questions in mind: Can chairs be removed if turnout is lower than expected? Does the space have good acoustics? Is the site wheelchair accessible? Is there sufficient space for tabling and selling merchandise? Is the site easy to find, and well known?
- Have a photographer at the event, taking pictures for follow-up press.
- Have a well planned information table. Distribute information on the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, as well as general information about the FME, the National Clinic Access Program, and reproductive rights. Display your Leadership Alliance banner and, as always, have a sign-in sheet for all who attend.
- Plan a strong opening for the show. Announce what Rock For Choice™ is, thank the bands for participating, and get the audience excited!
- Carefully choose your bands. If you need suggestions, contact local radio stations and clubs for ideas. Generally, these shows can include more than one band, and this will help broaden your audience. Since this is a benefit, the bands should play for free. Rock for Choice™ makes an effort to promote female musicians. Strive for gender and racial balance in your choice of bands.
- Have a verbal and written agreement with each band that indicates the date, time, length of play, and total fee.

Additional Actions

CELEBRATE ROE V. WADE!

During March, women's history month, students are encouraged to conduct actions highlighting the importance of *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized a woman's right to choose



Make Your Move!

abortion. Remember to make these actions highly visible. Here are some ideas for actions:

- Hold a candlelight celebration on campus. Arrange for local speakers (or faculty) to share stories about when abortion was illegal, the importance of choice, or their own experiences doing pro-choice work.
- Show a movie on abortion rights. Here are some suggestions:
 - **Jane: An Abortion Service** (available in most school libraries.)
 - **Abortion for Survival** (available from the Feminist Majority.)
 - **Abortion Denied** (available from the Feminist Majority.)
 - **When Abortion Was Illegal: Untold Stories** (available through Concentric Media at (415) 974-5881.)
 - **From Danger to Dignity: The Fight for Safe Abortion** (also available through Concentric Media at (415) 974-5881.)
 - **The Fragile Promise of Choice** (Concentric Media)
 - **If These Walls Could Talk** (available at most movie rental stores.)
- Flyer, table, and chalk the campus with the pro-choice message.
- Invite local abortion providers to be part of a pro-choice panel discussion. Include faculty members who have been involved with pro-choice activist work. For more details on how to organize a panel discussion, see the feminist career panel action component of Unit 9.
- Set up a large bulletin board or paper a wall in your student union for student pro-choice expression.

PRO-CHOICE POLLING ACTION

Poll your campus on the issue of choice. Is your campus pro-choice? By what percentage? Are faculty and administrators supportive of choice? What about the president of your college? Publicize results in the school newspaper.

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