

Court should hold to past in abortions

Today is the day many people have eagerly awaited — the U.S. Supreme Court will begin hearing oral arguments for a case that could overturn the Court's landmark 1973 abortion decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

Months of passionate demonstrations by pro-choicers and pro-lifers alike are culminating in today's appeal of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*. We hope the events and decisions that led to the court's decision in *Roe* will be upheld again and that cooler heads will reflect on the time when a person's right to privacy was upheld as a constitutional right.

In 1973 the Court upheld a woman's right to an abortion without state interference during the first trimester of pregnancy as a matter of a woman's personal privacy. We hope they reaffirm that decision in 1989.

The *Roe* decision was based on another controversial case that took place eight years earlier — *Griswold v. Connecticut* — in which Justice William Douglas stated that although privacy was not mentioned in the Constitution, it was an American's right to be "unencumbered by burdensome government intervention." There are judges who echo Douglas's sentiments, and there are judges who think that no right to privacy exists in the Constitution because it was not written in the text. We must agree with the former.

Today's debate centers on the constitutionality of a 1986 Missouri law, which limits a woman's access to abortion. The law contains controversial provisions that the Court could easily rule as violations of the *Roe* decision. Most notable is the legislation's preamble that states "the life of each human being begins at conception." In the *Roe* ruling, Justice Harry Blackmun wrote that states may not say when life begins, if the intent is to regulate abortions. Clearly this is what Missouri's legislation intends to do by banning abortions in public hospitals and clinics, forbidding the use of public funds to encourage or counsel women merely contemplating abortion and forbidding public employees from participating in abortions, except in instances when the mother's life is in danger.

The issue of when life begins may never be solved and will continue to prevent a common understanding between pro-choice and pro-life advocates. The pro-life forces believe life begins at conception, that abortion is murder and an excuse to hide sexual indiscretions. The pro-choice groups contend there is a point of viability in the life of a fetus — that the "child-in-question" cannot survive on its own before the 20th week of pregnancy. The American Medical Association finds this to be true, as does U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, an adamant pro-lifer. Pro-choice forces also hold tight to their right to privacy as the line not to be crossed.

But in delving past the medical, technical or legal stances on abortion, the debate becomes clouded in emotions by advocates of both sides. Whether one considers abortion as murder or as the prevention of another unplanned, unwanted and potentially abused child makes little difference in the debate. Whether a woman considers abortion, adoption or unwed motherhood does not make the choice any more or less difficult.

So what really lies at the heart of the issue is choice. And a person — in this case, a woman — should maintain the right to choose for herself. A woman who chooses to have an abortion does not automatically become a murderer or a martyr; she is a woman making a choice, and probably not an easy one at that.

As the Supreme Court decided in the past, the woman has a zone of privacy free of government intervention, which is hers to do with as she decides. Given the fact that the *Roe* case was decided under judicial precedence and that the Court rarely overturns a decision — particularly one with such volatile ramifications — pro-choice advocates can be heartened. And while *Roe v. Wade* should never be overturned and a woman should maintain the freedom of choice, more thought should be given to birth control and abstinence — the choices to be made before abortion becomes the all-encompassing issue.

To declare abortion illegal will not prevent the countless murders the pro-life groups contend abortion is. Rather, it will allow the courts and others to dictate what a woman can or can't do. The Supreme Court should uphold the fact that it is not right to strip an American of her rights to choice and privacy.



Letters

Take a stand

Isn't it time students took a stand on an issue that directly affects them? What about the increasing disappearance of our open space?

One of the most valuable resources we have — the Williamette River Greenway near the Autzen Footbridge — is receiving the last nails in its coffin.

This area is rich in many different species of wild flowers such as the California poppy and arise fennel. There's also diverse wildlife like beavers and over 100 species of birds. The area also has tremendous recreational value with the soccer field, the river and the bike path.

None of this will be the same in the shadow of six-story buildings and huge parking structures.

Why does the research park have to take away our open space? It can be accommodated at another location of just south of the railroad tracks. No one has bothered to ask the students if we want concrete pavement to cover up our only real field. Student concerns about the location of the research park have been systematically ignored. It's time to take a stand!

Vote "yes" on the campus greenway initiative (measure no. 90)!

Cheryl Brooks
English
Brian Hoop
Architecture

For Swires

I am writing to encourage all students to vote for Tonija Swires for the Incidental Fee Committee one-year seat. Tonija has organizational experience as the executive board chair for Lane County Democrats and budget experience as a member of the Lane County Democrats Budget Committee. She is also an active member of the Women's Center and Rape Crisis Network. With these qualifications, she is clearly one of the very best choices for the IFC one-year position.

On top of being one of the

best candidates for the IFC, she is also a student-parent. She can bring to the IFC a point of view that can only come from students that are not only working hard to put themselves through school, but are also working hard to raise a family.

As a student body that is rich in its diversity of opinions, points of view and needs, we deserve an IFC made up of experience and dedicated people that can ensure that our student incidental fees are spent wisely and well for all students. So when you go to vote in the general elections, remember to vote for experience and dedication and a diverse point of view — vote for Tonija Swires.

Asoka Diggs
Student

Catastrophe

By now, you've heard about the Alaskan oil spill near the port of Valdez. Tens of thousands of oil-soaked birds are dead or dying, but that's only the beginning here. What is happening in Prince William Sound is a horrible catastrophe. The place looks even worse than Boston Harbor did in those Bush-for-President TV commercials.

So who should get the blame for this ecological disaster?

We can start with Exxon, which made \$5.3 billion in profits last year. Lawrence Rawl, its chairman, got rid of 80,000 of the company's 182,000 employees, including all — not some, all — of its oil spill specialists.

But the biggest villains of all are the Republican politicians who created the conditions for this disaster.

The whole Valdez pipeline-tanker project was conceived in sin. In 1973, an immense congressional feud climaxed in a 49-49 vote in the Senate. Republican Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, with support from President Nixon, broke the tie in favor of Valdez and against the environmentalists' alternative of piping the oil across Canada, which would have eliminated the danger of tanker spills — a danger the oil lobby-

ists and their Republican friends scoffed at.

And now President Bush, who said nothing for three days after the disaster, spoke out: "... I do feel concern, but not to take action to guard against an incident of this nature."

All I can say is, "You're no environmentalist, Mr. President."

Michael Colson
Political science

Wilderness

The only entirely intact and wholly complete ecosystem in the entire United States is in grave danger. The same industry who brought us the devastating Valdez oil spill is now lobbying for permits to drill for petroleum in our last great wilderness, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

As has been painfully demonstrated by Exxon just recently, there is no ecologically sound or safe way to extract petroleum from the fragile Alaskan arctic.

The ANWR is a narrow strip of coastline extending roughly 100 miles along the Arctic Ocean's shores near Canada. This refuge is home to grizzly bears, musk oxen and wolverines, and is a critical summer ground for 180 species of birds as well as countless other species. Caribou also inhabit the region in great numbers.

Because oil drilling will seriously affect the numbers and migration routes of the porcupine caribou herd, the native Alaskans, who have depended on the caribou for thousands of years, will face cultural annihilation.

The last intact American ecosystem. Think about that. Is nothing sacred? Can't we set aside just one region to survive in perpetuity? Let's stop the oil industry from destroying our last pristine treasure, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Please, write your congressmen.

Andrew Swanson
Biology

Wednesday, April 26, 1989