

Professor testifies at Roe vs. Wade Senate hearing

James Mohr spoke about the historical impact of the decision

By Laura Cadiz
Higher Education Editor

Discussing the issue of abortion as a historian of a phenomenon and not an advocate of an issue, history Professor James Mohr testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Wednesday at a special hearing on Roe vs. Wade.

"I said what's remarkable about [the decision] — that

everyone attacked it from all directions, but it's still intact," he said. "It improved the health and safety of American women and gave women a constitutional right."

Mohr said the special hearing acted as a check point of the court case, now that it has been 25 years since the decision. Sen. Ted Kennedy invited Mohr to testify along with two physicians and three constitutional lawyers. Mohr discussed where abortion fits in from a historical perspective.

He is regarded as a national expert on the issue of abortion, a title he earned after his book, "Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy," was published in 1978.

"He's very much committed and in support of Roe vs. Wade and deeply grounded in American principles and constitutional law," history Professor John Nicols said.

Mohr, who supports the court decision, said the majority of the people at the hearing did not.

"The Senate majority leader

probably did not agree with me, but he was quite respectful and interested to hear," he said. "It seems to me that the law of the land now is right. Women have a privacy and dignity guaranteed to them in the Constitution."

Mohr said he first became interested in abortion when he looked at it from a social policy view — how it went from being legal to illegal throughout history.

"To me, [abortion] was an ideal look at policy-making," he

said. "I think it's a good example as a way history can inform modern history discussions."

Nicols said Mohr is successful at analyzing abortion because he takes looks at it from a rational standpoint.

"He is eminently rational and yet sensible to the emotional issues brought by both sides," he said. "It gives him a great deal of strength as an individual and a professor."

"If Jim took a position that I didn't agree with, I'd think pretty carefully about it."

Debate: OCA plans pro-life initiative

Continued from Page 1

candlelight commemoration by lighting the first of 30 candles.

The celebration marked the 1973 Supreme Court decision that challenged a Texas statute prohibiting abortion unless a woman's life was at stake. The case was originally filed by "Jane Roe," an unmarried Texan woman who wanted to legally terminate her pregnancy. In a 7-2 vote, the Court invalidated the Texas law. The Court's decision held that a woman's constitutional right to privacy includes having an abortion without government interference.

But the concept of a woman's right to choose has encountered increasing opposition in recent years by pro-life initiatives across the nation, and in danger as Oregon and other states provide fewer abortion services.

"We have an entire generation of women that has grown up with choice, and there is a false sense that it will be here forever,"

said Diane Duke, director of development and community services for Planned Parenthood in Eugene, during an interview.

Duke added that only eight out of 36 Oregon counties are currently home to locations that provide abortion services.

University law Professor Caroline Forell said pressure from anti-abortionists to close clinics has affected Eugene, as well as rural communities throughout the state.

"There are currently fewer abortion providers in Eugene than in the 1970s because of the pressure by anti-abortionists," she said.

Wyden alluded to a petition by the Oregon Citizens Alliance to limit abortions, saying, "I think all of you know we have some heavy lifting in the days ahead."

The OCA, a conservative pro-life lobbyist group, is petitioning to put the 1998 Anti-choice Initiative on the ballot.

According to Barry Williams,

OCA communications director for Lane County, the current petition aims to put the initiative on the ballot for the upcoming statewide November election.

Williams said the passage of the initiative would amend the state constitution by preventing second- and third-term abortions, or after the first 90 days of pregnancy. However, he said the amendment to the constitution would allow abortions when "it becomes necessary in order to save the life of the mother."

The right to have an abortion also has clashed with spiritual ideologies in the community. Outside of council chambers three members of the Russian Orthodox faith prayed softly.

"We stand to say that human life begins at conception and that is a sacred thing ... only God can take that life," said Deacon Stephen Dyer of Eugene's St. Paul of the Apostle Church.

"We're here to stand for the unborn who have no voice."

Crisis: University will defer tuition, loans spring term

Continued from Page 1

The University's offer includes tuition deferral and deferral of other University bills without penalty through spring quarter.

Students with immediate needs will be able to apply for emergency loans for living expenses from a \$100,000 fund. The loan fund has been accumulated through the years from private donations, said Ed Vignoul, director of the University's Office of Student Financial Aid.

The loan payment and interest can be deferred for up to six months, depending on the situation of the individual student, Vignoul said.

"We really aren't doing anything different for anyone."

These loans are available to both domestic and international students in crisis," Vignoul said.

Some families have already spent their savings on the changing costs of school, Malakar said.

"Some don't have money to eat. They don't have money for the basic necessities," she said. "They get phone calls from their parents saying, 'Come back next week, come back next month. This is your last term.'"

This is especially disastrous for juniors and seniors, she said, because the credits they have accrued here won't transfer once they get back to Southeast Asia or Korea. "Their work here will be worthless," she said.

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