Supreme Court draft on Roe v. Wade draws predictable reactions

BY WYATT TEGGINS
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The leaked draft of the Supreme Court's majority opinion to overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade case is bright-lining the differences on the two sides of the debate from the halls of Congress down to the local level.

The political journalism company Politico on Monday, May 2, published the 98-page first draft on its website. In the draft, Justice Samuel Alito stood in opposition to the 1973 ruling, commenting it "imposed a highly restrictive regime on states." Later he stated, "The Constitution makes no reference to abortion."

Oregon Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Advocates, An Do, stood in direct opposition to this claim in a press conference Tuesday, May 3.

"This is about what we care about," she said. "It's about the right to privacy, the right to marry who you want." Do portrayed the dismissal of Roe v. Wade was opening the floodgates to attacking civil rights.

If passed, it will be in the hands of each individual state to address what restrictions they place on abortion. While Oregon most likely will stay pro-abortion, Planned Parenthood is looking to expand into Ontario, anticipating a mass surge of patients across the Idaho border.

In a press conference, Lisa Gardener, CEO of Planned Parenthood in Southwestern Oregon, made it clear that expansion into Eastern Oregon is imminent, but how soon is unknown.

Idaho Gov. Brad Little has made several attempts to pass fetal heartbeat laws that would make it virtually impossible for abortions to occur in the state. Planned Parenthood brought a lawsuit to the Idaho Supreme Court, temporarily blocking the bill before it could take effect in April.

Little in a letter to the Idaho Senate acknowledged this was a likely outcome: "I fear the novel civil enforcement mechanism will in short order be proven unconstitutional and unwise."

Eastern Oregon will be the most accessible place for Idahoans to receive care. Planned Parenthood officials made it clear that by doing so they would be taxing an already taxed system. Providing a brick-and-mortar location in Eastern Oregon would take service providers that Planned Parenthood doesn't have.

Eastern Oregon also has the most dissent to abortion laws inside of Oregon.

Father Daniel Maxwell of the Hermiston Catholic Church expressed nothing but support to the possible Supreme Court ruling.

"We Catholics will be overjoyed because it will make abortion unthinkable by many people," he said.

Maxwell emphasized that abortion is prohibited by the Didache, a text the Catholic Church holds sacred, and the church's stance on abortion has not changed in hundreds of years.

"The Catholic Church has stood in opposition to abortion since the 15th century." Maxwell continued. "It's a mortal evil, you can't change what's true."

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

More than a dozen anti-abortion and anti-same sex marriage supporters gather in 2018 on the steps of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Pendleton on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Politico on Monday, May 3, 2022, leaked a draft of the Supreme Court's majority opinion to overturn the landmark 1973 case.

"They can call it whatever they want, but it's still taking another person's life," said John Herman, a member of the parish of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in La Grande, echoed that sentiment.

Maxwell and his church parish are not alone. Anti-abortion protests are not uncommon in Eastern Oregon, and in fact it was a major concern Planned Parenthood addressed in a press conference May 3. Several questions revolved around security measures at the soon to be Ontario Clinic and how the organization would address suspected protesters.

Officials gave assurances they have been diligently planning for this for a while, but refused to make an affirmative statement to the question.

Oregon's senior U.S. senator Ron Wyden blasted the Republican Party and the draft in a statement.

"The Republican party has set the stage for a total erosion of Americans' constitutional rights," Wyden said. "They have made clear they won't stop at gutting the right for a woman to make decisions about her own body. Republicans know that the majority of Americans don't support eroding fundamental rights like privacy, so instead, they packed the Supreme Court with right-wing extremists willing to do their dirty work behind closed doors."

Wyden said if this was a final draft, the United States will be one of a handful of countries moving backward on women's rights and marks a "devastating loss of constitutionally guaranteed bodily autonomy and privacy for more than half of America."

He stated abortion is health care.

"Ending this protected and established right — a right generations of women have now known and that the overwhelming majority of Americans support — would harm the health, safety and lives of millions of women and families," Wyden said. "This is going to be the fight of our lives, and we must use every tool at our disposal to stop this attack on constitutionally guaranteed rights."

According to Politico, Chief Justice John Roberts confirmed the authenticity of the draft but stressed the document "does not represent a decision by the Court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case."

Politico also noted, the draft opinion includes "a 31-page appendix of historical state abortion laws ... is replete with citations to previous court decisions, books and other authorities, and includes 118 footnotes."

And the "appearances and timing of this draft," according to Politico, "are consistent with court practice."

— East Oregonian news editor Phil Wright and Observer reporter Dick Mason contributed to this report.

Emily Curiel/Kansas City Star-TNS

People rally outside City Hall in Kansas City on Tuesday, May 3, 2022. Protesters gathered to express opposition to a draft written by the U.S. Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade.

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