

# Americans dislike ruling on abortion, polls show

By Liz Schevtchuk  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Many Americans, including those on both sides of the abortion issue, disagree with the U.S. Supreme Court's latest ruling on abortion, according to new public-opinion surveys.

Ruling July 3 in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services*, the high court upheld a Missouri law containing abortion restrictions but stopped short of overturning *Roe vs. Wade*, its 1973 decision legalizing abortion nationwide.

The Missouri law's provisions included a declaration that life begins at conception; a requirement that physicians perform various viability tests on fetuses apparently 20 weeks old or older; and a measure prohibiting public hospitals and personnel from performing any abortion not required to save a woman's life.

A Gallup poll, which surveyed the opinions of 1,253 people, found that 55 percent disapproved of the Supreme Court ruling while 37 percent backed it.

Gallup reported that most disagreement with the Supreme Court ruling came from those who favor liberal abortion policies. But criticism of the high court ruling also was heard from 29 percent of people who want *Roe vs. Wade* overturned, the Gallup organization said.

The public rift over the court's action was apparent in other polls as well.

A July 5 poll by the daily newspaper *USA Today*, which queried 662 people, found 50 percent displeased by the court decision and 40 percent supportive. *Time* magazine and Cable News Network, which conducted a joint poll July 3, found that of 504 people surveyed, 61 percent were opposed to the court ruling.

A *Newsweek* magazine poll that surveyed 751 people nationwide July 6-7 found 53 percent of respondents disagreed with the court ruling and 37 percent agreed.

But a July 3 nationwide poll the *Los Angeles Times* conducted of 756 Americans discovered that 47 percent approved of the

decision and 40 percent did not. The newspaper reported that the difference was too small to mean much statistically.

The public-opinion surveys also indicated that Americans have differing views on abortion-related policy options, but that many would support some restrictions.

Allowing governments to ban abortion in public hospitals except to save a woman's life was supported by 54 percent of respondents to the Gallup poll, by 56 percent in the *Los Angeles Times* poll, and by 54 percent in the *Newsweek* magazine poll.

Requirements for viability tests like Missouri's were backed by 52 percent of respondents in the Gallup poll, by 48 percent in the *Time-CNN* poll, by 57 percent in the *Los Angeles Times* poll, and by 52 percent of Minnesotans surveyed by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

Measures to ensure a parental role in a teen-age girl's abortion decision also proved popular.

Gallup found that requiring parents to be notified was backed by 67 percent of respondents to its poll.

*USA Today* found 75 percent backed parental notification, while 21 percent opposed it.

The *Time-CNN* poll found that by 72 percent to 25 percent Americans favor rules demanding parental consent for a teenager's abortion; *Newsweek* found 75 percent favored and 22 percent opposed parental consent requirements.

But other policy options on abortion provided varied responses.

One poll, by the *Boston Globe* newspaper and WBZ-TV, found that by 52 percent to 38 percent Americans would opt for amending the Constitution to ensure abortion rights. The poll surveyed 1,003 registered voters nationwide July 7-9.

*Newsweek* found that 51 percent of respondents think abortion should be legal in certain circumstances, 29 percent think it should be legal in any circumstances, and 17 percent think it should be illegal in all circumstances.



Portrait of the artist

AP Wide World Photo

Henriette Wyeth sits in her studio in San Patricio, New Mexico, where she has recently completed the religious painting in the background. Wyeth, at 81, is the country's first lady of art, daughter of famed illustrator N.C. Wyeth and sister of Andrew Wyeth.

## Feminist organization demands 'bill' containing abortion rights

CINCINNATI (CNS) — The National Organization for Women voted July 23 to promote a proposed federal "Bill of Rights for the 21st Century" that would guarantee abortion rights and related concerns.

The action came as the organization, commonly known as N.O.W., held its annual convention in Cincinnati, where the abortion issue drew the attention of not only abortion rights backers but abortion foes.

The two sides took to the streets July 22, when about 3,000 abortion rights supporters led by N.O.W. encountered some 300 pro-life demonstrators during an outdoor march.

Mounted police prevented the abortion opponents, organized in part by the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League, from direct contact with the abortion rights advocates.

The police reported no incidents and no citations of participants from either group.

"The league was well-represented ... and our signs, 'Stop Abortion Now' lined the curbs," Joseph M. Scheidler, Pro-Life Action League director, said July 24 in a statement.

"Nearly all the N.O.W.s could think of or talk about at their convention was their right to decapitate and scald babies to death in the womb," he declared.

In its proposed bill of rights, N.O.W. recommended amending the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution to include guarantees of the right to choose abortion and use birth control, and to receive public

funding for abortion, birth control and pregnancy services.

Delegates to the N.O.W. convention also resolved to study creation of a new political party "dedicated to equality for women" to serve those unhappy with "the failure of both major political parties to address women's needs."

They also passed a resolution in support of U.S. use of the so-called "abortion pill," a French-made drug that can induce abortions but which, according to supporters, also has other potential medical uses, such as cancer treatment.

N.O.W. President Molly Yard said the abortion-rights issue is helping to galvanize support for her group. Since April, when abortion rights promoters marched in Washington, N.O.W.'s membership has climbed from about 160,000 to 200,000, she said.

She said supporters would use electoral processes to preserve abortion and would target politicians who cast anti-abortion votes. "We will make this the issue of the '90s," Yard predicted. "Our opponents, the anti-abortion crowd in this country, want the right of a woman to control her reproductive rights to be a states rights issue," she said. "We aren't going to buy into that strategy."

The Supreme Court July 3 upheld a Missouri abortion restriction law, prompting both sides of the abortion issue to look toward the states as sites of new abortion fights.

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