

Sen. Maria Cantwell

June 13, 2024

Right to IVF Act Floor Speech

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: I rise to join my colleagues today. I want to thank my colleague from Washington, Senator Murray, for her leadership, and so many others on the floor today. I come to speak also about the Right to IVF Act and want to say how important it is that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle support this.

I want to take one minute, though, to talk about the important decision the Supreme Court just made on mifepristone. It's so important, because [over] 60% of abortions in the State of Washington are done with this drug. It is highly safe and effective medication used by millions of Americans, and the court ruled on standing alone. It didn't reach any conclusion about the ludicrous arguments that the plaintiffs were making.

So, America should not rest on this decision, because anti-choice activists are going to keep using the courts to target abortion. It's just another reminder of why we have to fight for reproductive freedom and why we can't rest.

I also, though, want to talk about how important it is to support the legislation in front of us. Every American should have a chance to use fertility treatments to bring new life into this world, and to become a parent.

This opportunity wasn't always available, and the first child conceived through IVF was born in 1978. That was an era of major advances and new freedoms for women. The right to have your own credit cards, the right to choose to have your access to an abortion and when you start your family, the right not to be discriminated against just in so many ways.

Today, nearly half a century after IVF, it is safe, it is well established, and many, many, many, many American families rely on it. In fact, more than 2% of all children born in the U.S. are born as a result of IVF.

We have IVF to thank for over 2,000 new lives created in the state of Washington just in 2022. IVF brings new life into the world and helps families start their families, and it shouldn't be controversial. That's why I can't believe that we have to take this action today, because there are those trying to make this hard-won right away from families, to take away their reproductive rights and their freedoms.

Since the Dobbs decision revoked the constitutional right to abortion, we've seen waves and waves of different things that affect our health care. February, in Alabama, the state supreme court shockingly ruled that frozen embryos have the same rights as living children. That forced IVF clinics in the state to temporarily halt their services. One can only guess why they halted those services.

At a Pacific Northwest facility in Seattle, a reproductive endocrinologist said her office got a wave of phone calls from fertility patients wanting to move embryos there, to the northwest, after the Alabama ruling. They were terrified that the ruling could cause complications for the embryos and the future of their IVF process. The doctor said there is an increase in cost, in complexity, and risk of damage to embryos associated with moving them because of the possibility of threats to IVF access.

So, I've heard so many stories from my own constituents and that of Senator Murray's. A mother from Kirkland told me she gave birth to a baby boy after four years of fertility treatments, but she's afraid that the future in states might force people like her to remain without that option.

A Spanaway mom of a 19-month-old conceived through IVF asked me to protect IVF so everyone can choose, when they start a family.

Grandparents from Bremerton of an IVF baby wanted me to know that during the IVF process, everything, everything, everything, everything, everything is time sensitive. But rulings like Alabama's throw the process into chaos, potentially, permanently ripping away the prospects forever these couples of having children.

A Vancouver woman struggling with infertility due to scarring in her abdomen pointed out that IVF is science, and courts and legislators shouldn't be interfering with it.

A woman in Everett currently going through IVF process for her second child urged me to ensure everyone has access to those treatments.

Mr. President, my constituents are right. Congress needs to act today to expand and protect the access to IVF.

While it is safe and common, the IVF process still is stressful. It is still expensive. And that is why the possibility of activists going to court in an overzealous anti-choice state, getting involved in these choices is not what we should support. We should support making sure that this right is protected. We can't have this continued attack on reproductive health care in the United States of America.

The bill we're voting on today would establish the right to access to IVF. It also could expand insurance coverage, which is incredibly expensive. Just one cycle can cost between \$15,000 and \$30,000, and many women require more than one cycle, so that cost can be as high as \$60,000. It would also allow our veterans to help preserve their opportunities.

In February, this chamber tried to pass a narrow bill codifying the right to access to IVF, and it was blocked.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim reproductive freedom isn't under attack. Trust me, come to the state of Washington where we have codified these rights, but we are seeing this happen.

Physicians who are moving to our state because they're not sure if they go home across the Idaho border that they're not going to get arrested. Women who are coming to get treatment, not sure they can go back to their state. The system now more clogged because more people are coming there because we provide the care. All of this making the system harder to deliver the important things.

I should just say, Mr. President, that people aren't even thinking of the two collision courses here is where the vertical integration of health care is making it harder and harder for people like gynecologists to even stay in business. And now we're making it harder and harder on states that are the ones carrying the burden of upholding reproductive rights.

So, I ask my colleagues to support this important measure. Let's make sure Americans have the freedom to decide for themselves when and how to have children, and let's put this to rest. Let's give Americans the certainty that fertility treatments in America are part of your health care delivery system.

I thank the president, and I yield the floor.