

Sen. Maria Cantwell

June 5, 2024

Right to Contraception Act Floor Speech

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

Sen. Cantwell: Madam President I join my colleagues out here on the floor. I thank the senator from Minnesota for her unbelievable advocacy on behalf of women and health care and for her constant leadership on this issue.

I'm glad to be joined with my colleague from Hawaii, who also has been such a great leader, both of them serving on the Judiciary Committee, the frontline of making sure that women's rights are protected. I thank them so much.

Most Americans alive probably don't remember a time when they didn't have the freedom to use birth control. I mean, we hear a lot about family planning. Well, what is family planning if you don't have access to contraception?

Most people don't remember a time when they didn't have the freedom to decide whether and when to have children.

In Idaho recently, they banned abortion. Now several of the state's colleges have banned their staff from even speaking to students about contraception. Imagine college students in the dark about something as basic as a health care service.

We've heard from a OBGYN doctor from Idaho who moved away from their state after their reproductive care law, like so many other physicians have done in other states. And one thing really stuck out about what she told us. She said, "They're not done."

After Texas, banned abortion, the state's governor said women should just use emergency contraception to avoid getting pregnant. But Texas had already stopped covering emergency contraception under their state family planning laws. Madam President, when they say they're not done, I believe them.

In Iowa, the abortion ban is blocked for now. But the state attorney general temporarily paused a public funding program that helped pay for emergency contraception for rape victims. 362 reimbursements have been delayed. Madam President, I believe them when they say they're not done.

In Arizona, where abortion rights have been in legal chaos due to a practically Civil War [era] ban. Republicans there unanimously blocked a vote to protect the right to access contraception.

In Virginia, people still have abortion rights, but the governor chose to veto a bill to protect and expand birth control access just hours before the deadline. So yes, they're not done.

In Florida where a near total abortion ban went into effect, lawmakers granted a so-called crisis pregnancy center authority a fivefold funding increase. These centers pretend to be real clinics while spreading misinformation about reproductive care, including contraception.

Across the country, anti-choice organizations are pushing false claims about contraception, fighting the access to contraception, and basically even saying that birth control should be illegal. So, they're not done.

And that is why we're here today. The Supreme Court took away our constitutional right to abortion. And according to even one justice, they said they're not done. So, the point is, that a woman [can] not even be sure if she can depend on the miracle of IVF to start a family.

America needs to know where people in this institution today stand on the reproductive rights of women, of family planning, of giving us access to contraception.

Today, in my state, the state of Washington, abortion and contraception are protected by law. But this bill is important to my state because health care laws in the nearby states affect our delivery care system.

The University of Washington just this week released a study that showed our state's abortion providers have seen a 50% increase of out-of-state patients since the Dobbs Decision. This study also found - now if you think about it, if you've seen a 50% increase in out of state patients, that means you're seeing more patients. What is the effect of seeing more patients?

The study also found that all patients are getting abortions about one week later than they were before the Dobbs decision, which is not as dangerous on the health care delivery side. Washington saw the largest increase in patients from those states who had banned abortion - states like Texas and Idaho, Louisiana, and Florida.

Now imagine if they carry this further and ban contraception too. Our state doesn't want to be impacted in the delivery of care. It wants people to be able to see a physician when they need to see a physician, get the care when they need to get the care.

If we want to keep the right to contraception, we want to keep the freedom to choose when people want to start their families. If we want to keep OBGYNs in our national network system, we need to codify this right here today. We have to protect this right so the Supreme Court can't take it away.

I'm glad to be a co-sponsor of the Right to Contraception Act. I certainly look forward to voting on this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

It just seems like not that long ago when our country recognized in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that we had this right. And when we've been talking about it for the last many years now, really, as so many people came before the Congress to be a nominee for a judicial branch. They all said this is all settled law. "Oh yeah, *Griswold v. Connecticut*."

Well, we always ask that question. Why? Because *Griswold v. Connecticut* was with the basis of a decision based on contraception that gave you this right to privacy. And now all of a sudden, not only was that ignored by the Supreme Court - it was amazing that when you think about the time before that people don't have access to contraception, it became such a day-to-day part of our lives.

If it's such a day-to-day part of our lives and the delivery of health care, then we should have the courage to say so and vote this way today. And if people don't, it's because they aren't done. And they don't want to protect this. And I guarantee you families deserve the privacy of knowing when and how they want to start their families.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and support our health care system that has been working very well with the support of contraception.

I thank the President and I yield the floor.