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Enough is Enough! A Doctor Calls for Keeping the Government Out of Your Private Medical Decisions

How One State Has Become a Model for Protecting Abortion Rights From Supreme Court

Arkansas Advocates Ready an 'Underground' Network for a Post-'Roe' World

of Your Private Medical Decisions

Apr 30, 2012, 8:28am Dr. Lori Gawron

My colleagues and I want high-quality contraception and abortion to be there when you need it, without interference from the government.



The following is from a speech given by Dr. Gawron at the Unite Against the War on Women Rally in Chicago, IL on April 28, 2012.

Good morning! My name is Dr. Lori Gawron, and I am an obstetrician/gynecologist at Northwestern University. I speak today on behalf of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, a doctor-led national advocacy organization. I am here because the War on Women in this country is targeting the health care my patients need. I am honored to be with you, and I thank you for standing up to tell our legislators that "Enough is enough"!

As an OBGYN, every day I see the importance of contraception and abortion in women's lives. I think of my patient, Kristin, the young mother of an infant and a three-year-old. Kristin had just returned to college after dropping out to have her two children. But soon after she returned to school, she had an unintended pregnancy while still nursing. When I saw her last year, she knew that continuing her education was the key to supporting the children she already had. She decided to end her pregnancy, and afterwards, we discussed which contraceptive would be most effective for her. She chose an IUD. I was thrilled to find out that Kristin will graduate from college in June.

My colleagues across the country and I are determined to provide Kristin and every other patient

comprehensive health care that incorporates abortion and contraception. But as we all know too well, many of our state and federal legislators have been working against us. In Illinois some elected officials are pushing a bill that would require an ultrasound before every abortion. Ultrasound can be a vital tool for OBGYNs in both prenatal care and abortion care. The problem here is not the ultrasound itself, it is the fact that the government would be in my exam room, forcing me to offer an ultrasound even when it's not medically necessary—and making my patient pay for it if she says yes. And there's more: my patient would have to sign a form indicating whether she accepted or rejected the ultrasound. This document would go to the government as part of a new, permanent record of the abortions in this state and the women who have them.

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The authors of the bill claim that women need to be “better informed” when deciding to have an abortion. But what about the women who come to me with wanted pregnancies? They don't have legislation meant to make them “better informed” through ultrasound. Same goes for women who are miscarrying—no bill for them, either. But if a woman wants to end her pregnancy, legally and safely, she is suddenly incapable of that decision without an ultrasound!

I think about Kristin again, my patient who is graduating from college— an ultrasound would not have changed her reasons for seeking an abortion or her decision to have one. We must trust women to know what is best for them and their lives. I encourage you to fight the ultrasound bill. Keep the government out of your personal, private medical decisions.

Another anti-abortion trend that has come to Illinois is so-called “personhood.” Those who believe in “personhood” want a fertilized egg to have the same rights as you and I have. If personhood gets into our state law, abortion would be a crime, and other health care, like certain infertility treatments and contraceptives, would be in jeopardy. The people of Mississippi resoundingly rejected a personhood initiative this November, and in Colorado they have defeated personhood in landslides twice. Let's keep personhood off the Illinois ballot altogether.

Last November, I lobbied on Capitol Hill with other doctors from Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health to explain why every insurance plan must cover contraception, in full. No matter what our opponents say, this coverage would be one of the most significant improvements

in women's health care in a long time. Every woman, regardless of her employer's religious affiliation, should benefit from this advance.

Every one of you has a story, and each story involves your own reproductive health decisions. My colleagues and I want high-quality contraception and abortion to be there when you need it, without interference from the government. Please call your legislators to say "Enough is enough"!

Thank you!

TOPICS AND TAGS: Abortion, Abortion restrictions, Access to abortion, Access to contraception, Activism, Advocacy, Birth choice, Contraception, Law and Policy, Legislation, OB/GYNs, obgyn, Personhood, Physicians for Reproductive Choice, Politics, Reproductive rights, Roe vs. Wade, Sexual rights, Women's rights

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