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Deeply Divided Over Abortion? *USA Today* Maps a Post-Roe America

Thursday, April 20, 2006

What would happen if *Roe v. Wade* were reversed? That question interests both sides in this nation's abortion debate, and no one can know just how each state would respond — but some states have already signaled their intentions.

According to a front-page article on Monday's *USA Today*:

What would states do? Ultimately, that would depend on factors ranging from who was governor to where public opinion stood. Even so, there are clues from what state legislatures have chosen to do already and what they're considering doing next.

*For instance, four states have passed "trigger" bans on abortion that would go into effect immediately if *Roe* were reversed. Six other states have passed laws that would automatically protect access to abortion. Three states have enacted all 11 of the current restrictions on abortion tracked by the non-profit Alan Guttmacher Institute, from requiring waiting periods to limiting abortion coverage in insurance plans. One state, Vermont, hasn't passed any restriction.*

The paper reports that 22 states would be likely to impose significant restrictions on abortion. "They include nearly every state in the South and a swath of big states across the industrial Rust Belt, from Pennsylvania to Ohio and Michigan. These states have enacted most of the abortion restrictions now allowed."

In contrast, 16 states would be expected to continue access to abortion at current levels. "They include every state on the West Coast and almost every state in the Northeast. A half-dozen already have passed laws that specifically protect abortion rights. Most of the states in this group have enacted fewer than half of the abortion restrictions now available to states."

That leaves 12 states in some kind of middle ground. So:

The result, according to this analysis, would be less a patchwork of laws than broad regional divisions that generally reinforce the nation's political split. All but three of the states likely to significantly restrict abortions voted for President Bush in 2004. All but four of the states likely to maintain access to abortion voted for Democrat John Kerry.

The 22 states likely to enact new restrictions include 50% of the U.S. population and accounted for 37% of the abortions performed in 2000, the latest year for which complete data were available.

The 16 states likely to protect access to abortion include 35% of the U.S. population and accounted for 48% of the abortions performed.

If nothing else, this analysis indicates once again that virtually unrestricted access to abortion is the law of the land only because of the unilateral action of the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court usurped the democratic process and acted in a manner that, even thirty years later, still does not reflect the convictions of the American people.

Take Ohio, for example. Pro-life legislators in the state are considering legislative initiatives that would restrict

abortion. As Ohio House Democratic leader Joyce Beatty acknowledged to the paper, “If we voted on this tomorrow in this House, I would lose.” She also admitted that at least a third of her fellow Democrats in the House would join Republicans in supporting the bills. Now, who is afraid of representative democracy?

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