



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WASHINGTON

Empowering all Washingtonians to engage in a more responsible and responsive democracy

ISSUE PAPER – REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Position statement

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that “public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices...and supports equal rights for all regardless of sex. The League supports action to bring laws into compliance with the ERA: a) to eliminate or amend those laws that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of sex; b) to promote laws that support the goals of the ERA; c) to strengthen the enforcement of such existing laws.”

The League of Women Voters believes reproductive health care should be affordable, available, and should provide a comprehensive range of services including abortions.

Abortion was legal across the United States until the 1890s. In the 1890s religious authorities and some politicians advocated for a ban on abortions. Consequently, during the 1960s several groups organized to advocate for the legalization of abortion. In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled that the issue of abortion and abortion rights falls under the right of privacy. The court found that a mother had a right to abortion until viability, a point to be determined by the attending physician.

The birth control movement began during the early 1900s with Margaret Sanger’s advocacy. In 1936 the U.S. court ruled that medically prescribing contraception to save a person’s life or wellbeing was not illegal. By 1937 national surveys showed that 71% of the adult population supported the use of contraception. The Affordable Care Act requires all plans in the Health Insurance Marketplace to cover contraceptive methods.

Summary of Issues for the 2019 Legislative Session

Legislation dealing with access to contraception and abortion rights has been introduced during the past several legislative sessions but has not made much progress. During the 2019 Legislative session legislation concerning expanding access to contraception, paid family and medical leave programs to improve health and reduce inequality, and sexual assault protection may be introduced.

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