

March 15, 2024

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Impact Research

Re: **Key Findings and Guidance for Abortion Policy Messaging**

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Recent nationwide polling shows support for protecting abortion access remains strong. Americans across the board oppose government restrictions on their ability to decide whether or not to have an abortion, and they agree that decisions around abortion **shouldn't be determined by politicians**. When speaking about abortion, **instead of talking about when abortion should be legal, it is better to underscore who gets to make decisions on abortion**. This is the strongest rebuttal to laws that would restrict abortion access, as well as the best proactive message when advocating for abortion throughout pregnancy.

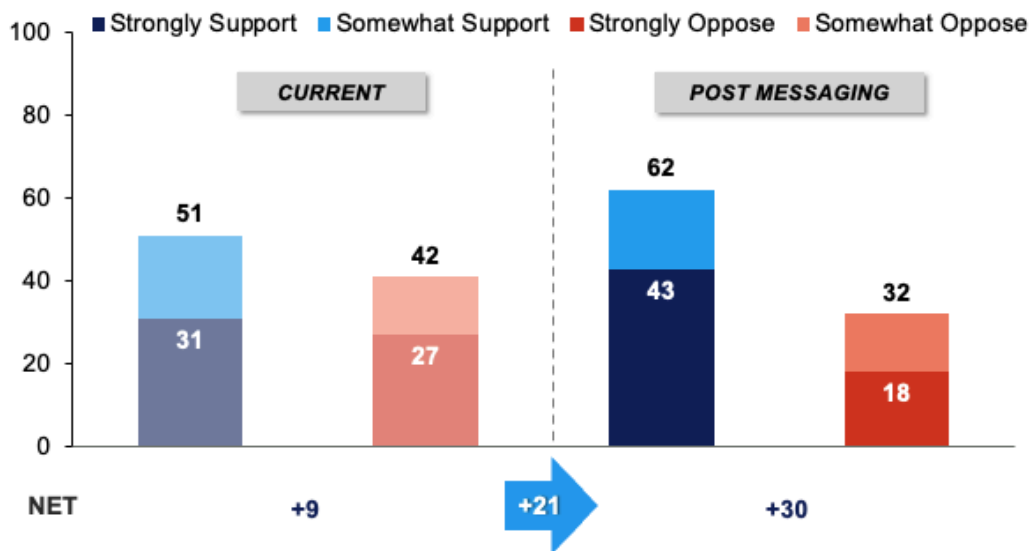
- **Over 80% of Americans believe abortion care should be legal, regardless of their personal views on the issue.** Almost half (49%) support abortion being legal and available without caveats. Another 32% are personally opposed to abortion but believe that Americans should have the right to make that decision for themselves. While liberals (98%) and Independents (83%) are especially supportive of legal access to abortion, a majority (58%) of conservatives also believe abortion should be legal despite how they personally feel about the issue.
- **Americans agree that politicians should not be making arbitrary decisions on abortion.** Messaging that emphasizes that decisions on abortion should be made by patients and doctors – not by politicians picking an arbitrary cut-off period – is incredibly potent. Nearly 6-in-10, including a majority of Independents (63%), believe that decisions on when to have an abortion should be left to patients and doctors, when compared to a statement that describes a 15-week abortion ban with exceptions as a reasonable policy. Even a third of those who initially support banning abortion after 15 weeks with exceptions agree that abortion decisions should be made by patients and their doctors over a 15-week ban with exceptions being a reasonable policy.
- **A majority of Americans believe that exceptions do not work.** By a 16-point margin, Americans agree with a statement that emphasizes that exceptions do not work because there are too many circumstances where a woman may need an abortion, but not be able to get one (54%) compared to a statement that says that exceptions are reasonable and protect women while reducing abortions overall (38%). Independents agree that exceptions do not work by a similar margin (49% - 33%), and more than a third (35%) of voters who initially support a 15-week abortion ban with exceptions agree with the statement that says exceptions do not work.
- **There is strong agreement that politicians are not qualified to make decisions on abortion at any point in pregnancy.** About two-thirds of Americans agree that lawmakers who are trying to pass abortion restrictions should not be making medical

These findings are based on a nationwide online and text-to-web survey conducted by Impact Research February 22 – 28, 2024 of N=1000 registered voters with N=200 each oversamples among AAPI, Black, and Latino voters. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.1\%$  for the full sample and higher among subgroups.

decisions (65%) compared to a statement that highlights that lawmakers who are trying to pass abortion restrictions are trying to reduce abortions (28%). A majority of Independents (63%) and those with soft opinions on abortion (58%) - Americans who do not believe abortion should be legal in all cases or illegal in all cases - also believe lawmakers who pass restrictions on abortion shouldn't be making medical decisions.

- Message frames that highlight politicians' lack of qualifications to make decisions on abortion, how abortion bans personally affect people, and the importance of protecting our freedom to make personal medical decisions resonate.** A message on politicians not being more qualified to make healthcare decisions than you and your health care providers is the best-testing message in support of protecting access to abortion throughout pregnancy overall (35% top 3 choice) and among those who move to support protecting access to abortion throughout pregnancy after messaging (38%). Message frames that help people understand how abortion bans could affect them and their loved ones (31%), emphasize that no law should take away people's freedoms to make their personal medical decisions (30%), and highlight that there's no compromising on people's ability to control their own bodies (29%) are also well-received.
- Messaging in support of protecting access to abortion throughout pregnancy resonates and moves the needle on support for abortion throughout pregnancy.** After a series of messages in support of abortion access, net support for protecting access to abortion throughout pregnancy increases by 21 points overall and *strong* support (43%) outpaces total opposition (32%). While there is movement across all subgroups, there were significant gains with Independents (+42 net shift) – who were initially divided in their support – and among those who have soft opinions on abortion (+27 net shift).

After more information, do you support or oppose ensuring that access to abortion is protected throughout pregnancy, including later in pregnancy?



- Americans view conservatives as holding the more extreme views on abortion.** By an almost 2:1 margin, Americans view conservatives as having more extreme views on the issue of abortion (55% conservatives / 29% liberals) – including about half of

Independents (49% conservatives / 20% liberals). Americans also trust liberals more than conservatives on abortion policy (45% liberals / 29% conservative). Independents are 21 points more trusting of liberals on abortion policy (34% liberals / 13% conservatives) although a majority (54%) aren't sure who to trust.

**Recommendations for responding to attacks on abortion throughout pregnancy:**

- **Emphasize that politicians do not have the expertise to make decisions on abortion:**
  - *At no point in pregnancy is a politician more qualified to make decisions about your health than you and your health care providers.*
  - *Health care decisions, including abortion, should be guided by medicine and science - not determined by politicians picking an arbitrary cut-off period.*
- **When appropriate, help people understand how they and their loved ones could be impacted by abortion bans noting that the effects are widespread.** While we don't want to solely focus on talking about pregnancy complications and other negative health outcomes, educating Americans about how abortion care is critical for ensuring safe pregnancies expands their understanding of abortion care.
  - *Laws should not prevent health care providers from using their best professional judgment or take away our ability to make our own personal medical decisions. You and your loved ones should be able to get the health care you need.*
  - *Banning abortion makes pregnancy less safe for you and your loved ones. We all know someone who has or will have a miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, preeclampsia, sepsis, or other unpredictable situations in pregnancy where abortion care is needed.*
- **Highlight that politicians should instead let patients and their doctors make medical decisions.**
  - *The decision to have an abortion should be between a patient and their doctor who know the situation best.*
- **Emphasize that any restrictions on abortion go against our human right to control our own body and our freedom to make our own personal medical decisions.**
  - *The right to control our own bodies is a human right. There is no compromising on people's ability to control their own bodies and personal decisions.*