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Name:

Course:

Professor Name:

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Introduction

Abortion refers to the voluntary termination of a pregnancy, resulting in the death of the fetus or embryo. According to Grabber (1996) abortions performed prior to the third trimester are legal in the United States. This has created a lot of controversy over the years in the United States. Ideally the issue has polarized mainstream political parties. Almost all state Democratic Party policies support abortion while almost all state Republican Party policies oppose it. The Democratic Party is for pro-choice while the republicans are for pro-life. The pro-choice ideology believes that women have the right to access any health care that they need and should have the control over their bodies. On the other hand, the republicans (pro-life) believe that the fetus or the embryo is 'alive' hence aborting equates to murder (Grabber, 1996). This raises the question, to what degree should the government have a say on pregnancy. According to the national abortion rights action league (NARAL), the woman reproductive rights are more controlled today than in the times of Roe (1973). This debate has raised two questions that need to be answered: should intact dilation and extraction be legal and should first trimester remain legal in United States. McBride (2007) asserts that these two issues have made abortion to remain one of the most controversial issues in United States culture and politics, with the main protagonists most often labelled either as 'pro-choice' or 'pro-life', though shades of opinion exist. Studies put United States abortion rate at about 1.37 million abortions per year, and this is about 3700 a day. The magnitude of the debate has forced Politicians to make it clear whether they are for or against abortion. Even though it is legal to have abortion federally, it can be turned over by making state laws against abortion (McBride, 2007).

History the abortion issue

In view of McKay (2005) abortion in America became legal in 1973 by a Roe versus Wade which is a US Supreme Court case. After this judgment, abortion became one of the most controversial issues in America. It divided the country into two sides: pro-choice and pro-life (McKay, 2005). To understand this issue more clearly one has to understand the root cause of the problem which leads to looking into the history of the topic.

Before 19th century, Americans adopted English Common Laws for judging sins. According to the common law, abortion before quickening was legal. And although abortion after quickening was illegal, only women could know whether they had a quickening. However, in early 19th century, written laws restricting abortion were made in about 10 states. And, through mid to late 19th century, Doctors hold out a campaign to ban abortion. The reason why doctors tried to forbid abortion was mainly because they wanted to build up their status as regular doctors (McKay, 2005). Doctors in this time were not as high ranked as today. They wanted to abolish midwives, Indian doctors, and unlicensed doctors from medical field. Their goal was achieved when laws banning abortion were settled in every state.

However, this situation changed in 1960s. McKay (2005) says specialists such as doctors, lawyers, and Planned Parenthood, mobilized a movement for deregulation of abortion laws. They felt America needed reforms to ensure the number large of women who died as a result of illegal abortion was eliminated. Other associations joined in to push for the aimed agenda. These movements paid off in 1973 when Roe versus Wade case took place and abortion became legal (McKay, 2005).

Why is abortion topic then so critical?

The issue of abortion is critical because of many elements. As I mentioned in the beginning, politicians are required to give their stand on abortion and secondly according to

Seger (1995) most of the politicians in Democratic Party are pro-choice, while on the other hand, most of the politicians in Republican Party are pro-life; all this contributes to its intensity (Seger, 1995). The other factor according to Leege (1993) contributing toward this debate is religious issues attached to abortion. Many pro-life believe birth begins when the fertilization occurs, and so that abortion at any stage is murder. For them abortion is not only ethically wrong but a sin which is highly disregarded in the bible, Murder is forbidden in the Mosaic Law. It also goes against Gods words unto his people, “be fruitful and multiply.” The pro-choice belief women should be given the full will to decide for themselves what is best for them (Leege, 1993). Women should be given the right to decide to abort or to keep the pregnancy; the life of the unborn rests on the hands of the mother. This kind differences are very difficult to solve, hence gives the discrepancy in the two apposing sides of the topic, Abortion.

The stand of the American population on abortion

A quick analysis of the polls which have been done on abortion according to Tatalovich (1998) signifies the great division among the American people, making the country at stalemate. Tatalovich notes that a research which was conducted by Pew research centre in 2009 showed 45% of the American people in favour of illegalizing abortion while 47% was for abortion to be legal. The researcher was to the view that Americans seemed to say that abortion was immoral while still supporting the Roe verses Wade (Tatalovich, 1998).

He goes further to say another research done by American national Elections Studies in 2008 suggested that 15% of the population regretted the legalization of abortion in 1972 case. 11% supported the verdict of the case. However, support for legal abortion in a case of “clear need” beyond rape, incest or health was at 19 percent. And legal abortion “always as a personal choice” captured between 35 percent and 40 percent of the support (Tatalovich,

1998). This two researches show a great division among the American people.

Republican Party Position on Abortion

The republicans are for pro-life Gushee (2008) explains. They strongly believe that the unborn child has fundamental right of life which can not be infringed. They support a human life amendment to the constitution which covers the unborn child in the fourteenth amendment protection. They highly support the traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life. They highly oppose the promotion of entities that promote, perform, or fund organizations which perform abortion and more important they disagree with the subsidizing health care that includes abortion coverage (Gushee, 2008).

Secondly, Gushee admits that the Republicans promote adoption and abstinence as opposed to abortion clinic referrals. Their view is that teens should be encouraged and educated on the importance of abstinence. It is true that American teenagers have contracted sexually transmitted diseases which have caused them emotional harm, serious health consequences and even death. They believe in the responsibility of parents in educating their teenagers on the disadvantages and advantages of abstinence and if they can not then the use preferred tools like contraception is necessary (Gushee, 2008). It is true that abstinence is the only method that gives 100% protection against unwanted pregnancies and more importantly the HIV and AIDS.

Third, the republicans believe one way of eliminating abortion is to have a ban on abortion with constitutional amendment. It is very vital to have the rights of the unborn child protected up to the letter just like the other human beings. This can only happen if the 14th amendment of the constitution is amended to cover the unborn child. Their agenda is to push for this without necessary punishing those that do the act.

In addition, Republicans are of the view that other methods of solving unwanted

pregnancies like adoption instead of abortion should be encouraged to evade child “murdering”. They believe in ensuring that women with pregnancy issues should be given the required support, material and encouragement to ensure both lives are taken care of. They salute those entities that do offer and encourage people to go for the other alternatives to abortion (Gushee, 2008).

Democratic Party Position on Abortion

On the other hand, McKay (2005) notes that the Democratic side purely stands behind the idea of giving right to every woman to choose in relation to the precedent of Roe versus Wade case judgement. To them, the ability to take care of the bill of the procedure is not an issue; the root of the issue is deciding what the woman ones. This was made clear by the former president Bill Clinton who took a higher step of ensuring this fundamental right of women is ensured in America. The belief is based on the fundamental constitutional liberty that each individual American not the government can best take responsibility for making this fundamental difficult and intensely personal decision on reproduction (McKay, 2005). They actually believe in inclusion where each individual’s conscience is respected.

The pro-choice side believes in ensuring that abortion is made less necessary and rare as opposed to making it difficult and dangerous. People should not be endangered by seeking abortion services in the “back door” clinics. Seeking these services in the right places will reduce the number of deaths that occurs as a result of abortion. Thus, they strongly and unequivocally support Roe v. Wade, investing in stem cell and other medical researches, pursuing embryonic stem cell research, the right to choose even if mother cannot pay and finally respecting the fundamental and constitutional right to choice for each American citizen (McKay, 2005).

Supporting the Roe versus Wade assumes the idea that women have the right to make

their decisions regarding their pregnancies which includes a safe and legal abortion, regardless of their economic ability to pay for the service offered. To the Democrats, abortion is an intensely personal decision between a woman, her family, her doctor, and her clergy; there is no place for politicians or government to get in the way. The government is there to provide proper health care and education to help reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies hence reducing the need for abortion and also ensure that woman's decision to have a child is guaranteed by providing affordable health care and ensuring the availability of and access to programs that help them during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, including caring adoption programs (Mckay, 2005).

Investing in stem cell and other medical research is very fundamental to the democrats. To them investing in stem cell and other medical programs gives hope to the hopeless American women who have no children. And gain, ensures that every American receives the desired cure and treatment of the disease that are relevant to reproductive health. Concerning further research they are on record saying that they were disappointed by the act of the then president, George Bush, to reject the request by the American people to have assistance with embryonic stem cell research. It is their view that this technology gives hope to the hopeless American people who have serious illnesses-from Alzheimer's to heart disease to juvenile diabetes to Parkinson's. above all, there is no wrong in pursuing research under strictest ethical guidelines aimed at saving lives and reduce human suffering (Mckay, 2005).

The future of the abortion debate

The future of the abortion debate is not actually clear but Wolfe and Katzneton (2010) agrees that the debate issue is not going anyway soon. This is supported by the proposition 26's failure in Mississippi notwithstanding. The group which was behind the move,

Personhood USA, is still trying in other States. According to some of the recent polls conducted on abortion, shows that the American people do not want a big move in either direction of the debate even though the American demography have change a lot since the time of the case of Roe verse Wade. But the truth of the matter is that, it is very unlikely that there will be America without an abortion debate anytime soon. Taking the consideration the importance of the intense pro-life areas such as South Carolina and Iowa to the presidential primaries, the debate will be here to stay (Wolfe & Katzneton, 2010). More importantly, Leege (1993) is of the view that America's religiosity and American's stalemate on the rights of the fetus versus the rights of the mother has made America different from other countries that have managed to put the abortion issue to bed (Leege, 1993). This is because both sides of the abortion debate seem to be able to cast themselves in terms of rights; and we all know Americans like rights.

The force of the active activists who equates abortion with mass murder and genocide are not many but can not be underestimated in anyway. For instance, anti-abortion activists have sharpened their message, perhaps winning over non-religious people and others who would not normally oppose abortion. The "partial-birth" abortion debates of the 1990s, for example, focused on a rare procedure, banned in 2003, called intact dilation and extraction in which a fetus is partially removed from the uterus and its skull collapsed to complete the abortion. A small downtick in abortion support during the 1990s may be because of the partial-birth abortion debate (Wolfe & Katzneton, 2010). Finally, Leege (1993) said, abortion has become a magnet for political polarization, meaning that strict abortion rights proponents and strict opponents are the ones who make it to office.

The way forward on abortion issue

This issue has always been a thorny issue in America, everyone can testify. Gushee,

(2008) equates it to an open wound on the body of America, but one that was mostly hidden from view. *Roe v. Wade* shined a bright light on that wound, but instead of coming together to do our best to fix the wound, we have spent the past 40 years scratching it raw, rubbing salt in it, and doing whatever we can to turn that wound into a festering, infected, smelly mess. This is because we have focused on what we cannot agree on, the question of when life begins, instead of what is common to us all, compassion for women and compassion for children (Gushee, 2008). Yes, we can legislate, adjudicate, advocate and protest the issue but does it really help? Not really, Americans should focus their efforts in supporting women and giving them the required compassion as opposed to tearing each other. Understanding we are all interested in other important issues like improving prenatal health, reducing domestic violence, and providing support to the poor children for a start. Every American needs to start building bridges with each other regardless of their different views in order to heal this wound and help strengthen the nation.

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