

JANUARY 22, 2002

**STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY
29TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ROE V. WADE**

CHICAGO, IL - When we as a nation speak about freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom from fear, we must not forget freedom of choice.

Our current Supreme Court is narrowly divided, with a razor thin 5-4 majority in support of a woman's right to choose. President Bush will likely have the opportunity to name at least one, if not more, justices to the Court, more than enough to tip the balance and overturn Roe v. Wade. The President opposes the freedom to choose. He has cited Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, two of the Court's most virulent opponents of Roe, as his model justices. It is likely that his nominees will share his views and vote to overturn Roe v. Wade, the end of legal abortion in this country, if appointed.

We must remain vigilant, keeping watch on the Court and the Bush Administration. When a retirement is announced, we must be ready to make our voices heard in defense of the freedom to choose.

It is critical that Roe V. Wade is upheld in the courts. Although the right to choose is guaranteed, state legislatures and the Congress have been moving aggressively to restrict women's access to reproductive health services. Many of these restrictions are challenged on a legal basis, making the court system one of the most important fronts in the ongoing struggle to protect the right to choose.

In addition to the Supreme Court, the lower federal courts, where many key reproductive rights decisions are handed down, are also in jeopardy. The Administration is engaged in a campaign to pack these lower courts with judges who will roll back basic constitutional freedoms, including civil rights, workers' rights, and the right to choose.

Since the President nominates judges and the Senate must confirm them, we must stand with, mobilize the grassroots, and provide solid support to pro-choice Senators who will lead the fight against the President's most controversial nominees. We must give help them defeat judges like Charles Pickering, Sr. nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit of. He is a right-wing ideologue who first led the Republican charge of a Constitutional Amendment to ban abortion. He does not have a place on the federal bench.

While the Courts are under attack, legislators are also attempting to introduce and push anti-choice, anti-women, and anti-family legislation that will weaken Roe v. Wade. Both internationally and domestically, the Administration and legislators have been pushing anti-choice measures. On his first day in office, President Bush re-implemented the

Mexico City Policy or the global gag rule. Domestically, we have fought efforts to pass the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, restrict contraceptive coverage for federal employees, increase abstinence-only funding, and restrict the use of mifepristone.

Over 262 anti-choice legislative efforts have been implemented since 1995 on both the state and federal levels.

We can not afford to lose this fight. It is too important to us, our daughters and granddaughters. We must remain vigilant on every level, through administrative advocacy, state and federal legislative measures, and court appointments. and fight harder this year because our freedoms are too precious to give up.