



# Amid frenzy, Nevada protects abortion

**While progressives watch in horror as** draconian anti-abortion bills are passed by state legislatures in Republican-controlled states this year, let's remember how much we owe to a group of visionary women who successfully organized to pass a voter initiative in 1990, Question 7, to ensure that women in Nevada have legal access to abortion no matter what happens in the rest of the country.

That didn't stop Nevada's anti-choice legislators this year from doing their best to argue against reproductive freedom by training their ire on Senate Bill 179, a bill intended to update Nevada's abortion statutes by removing criminal penalties and inappropriate medical requirements, such as requiring doctors to ask women about their marital status.

During the Senate debate, Sen. Yvanna Cancela—179's sponsor—tried to keep her colleagues focused on the intent and language of the bill, which modernized abortion statutes, making it crystal clear that no one can be criminally prosecuted

for a legal abortion in Nevada—not the woman, or her doctor, or a pharmacist supplying the “morning after” pill. But abortion opponents ignored the content of the bill, choosing to seize the moment to publicly air their anti-abortion views, starting with Sen. Joe Hardy, who declared “I stand in support of life,” regaling the Senate with an Easter religious message more suited to a church than a secular legislative body.

Sen. Ira Hansen became quite emotional, saying his teen mother would have aborted him if abortion had been legal in 1960. He complained there are no restrictions on “same sex” abortions—I think he meant gender-based—and compared the procedure to slavery in its repugnance. That was after he mansplained feminist history.

Sen. Scott Hammond talked endlessly about the wonders of adopting his own children, inferring the bill somehow restricted adoptions. Sen. Julia Ratti spoke of her own adoption by loving parents,

a not-so-subtle reminder that Democrats were hardly opposing adoption by updating consent provisions for abortions.

Ultimately, two Democrats voted against the bill, Sens. Mo Denis and Marcia Washington, although neither made a floor statement to explain their decision, while one Republican, Sen. Ben Kieckhefer, silently voted with the Democratic majority to pass the bill 12 to 9.

When the bill reached the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee, there were nonsensical and strident arguments against it, with some witnesses insisting it would promote pedophilia and take away a woman's right to consent to the procedure.

During the Assembly debate, Republican women opposed the bill's removal of the requirement that a woman provide written proof of her age, saying it could lead to sexual exploitation or trafficking of under-age children. But the argument was a red herring since the bill doesn't prevent a doctor from checking the age of the patient,

nor does it remove any requirements from medical professionals who must report suspected child abuse.

In the end, the bill passed easily, on a vote of 27 to 13, with just one Democrat, Assemblywoman Dina Neal, crossing party lines to vote with the Republicans.

Women cheered the bill's passage in Carson City on a day of national protests against state abortion bans that are clearly designed to provoke a confrontation at the U.S. Supreme Court. One Republican state legislator in Texas even introduced a bill to make abortion a homicide, punishable by the death penalty. This is where 46 years of debating legal abortion has led us.

Those of us who remember the pre-1973 days of illegal abortions resent having to fight this battle again in 2019, but perhaps it's the only way to galvanize younger women to political action as they realize their vote is all that protects us from the tyranny of those who want to take away our freedom to make our own health care decisions. □

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