Introduced by Representatives Pugh of South Burlington, Grad of Moretown,
Ancel of Calais, Anthony of Barre City, Bartholomew of
Hartland, Beck of St. Johnsbury, Bock of Chester, Briglin of
Thetford, Brownell of Pownal, Brumsted of Shelburne, Burke
of Brattleboro, Campbell of St. Johnsbury, Carroll of
Bennington, Chase of Colchester, Chesnut-Tangerman of
Middletown Springs, Christensen of Weathersfield, Christie of
Hartford, Cina of Burlington, Coffey of Guilford, Colburn of
Burlington, Conlon of Cornwall, Conquest of Newbury,
Copeland-Hanzas of Bradford, Cordes of Lincoln, Demrow of
Corinth, Dolan of Waitsfield, Donovan of Burlington, Durfee of
Shaftsbury, Elder of Starksboro, Emmons of Springfield,
Gannon of Wilmington, Gardner of Richmond, Giambatista of
Essex, Gonzalez of Winooski, Haas of Rochester, Hashim of
Dummerston, Hill of Wolcott, Hooper of Montpelier, Hooper of
Randolph, Hooper of Burlington, Houghton of Essex, Howard
of Rutland City, James of Manchester, Jerome of Brandon,
Jessup of Middlesex, Jickling of Randolph, Johnson of South
Hero, Killacky of South Burlington, Kitzmiller of Montpelier,
Kornheiser of Brattleboro, Krowinski of Burlington, LaLonde
of South Burlington, Lanpher of Vergennes, Lippert of
Hinesburg, Long of Newfane, Macaig of Williston, Masland of
Thetford, McCarthy of St. Albans City, McCormack of
Burlington, McCullough of Williston, Mrowicki of Putney,
Myers of Essex, Nicoll of Ludlow, Notte of Rutland City,
Noyes of Wolcott, Ode of Burlington, O’Sullivan of Burlington,
Pajala of Londonderry, Partridge of Windham, Patt of
Worcester, Rachelson of Burlington, Ralph of Hartland, Scheu
of Middlebury, Seymour of Sutton, Sheldon of Middlebury,
Sibilia of Dover, Smith of Derby, Squirrell of Underhill,
Stevens of Waterbury, Sullivan of Dorset, Szott of Barnard, Till
of Jericho, Toleno of Brattleboro, Toll of Danville, Townsend
of South Burlington, Trieber of Rockingham, Troiano of
Stannard, Walz of Barre City, Webb of Shelburne, White of
Hartford, and Yacovone of Morristown

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Health; fundamental rights; reproductive rights

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to recognize as a
fundamental right the freedom of reproductive choice and to prohibit public
entities from interfering with or restricting the right of an individual to terminate the individual’s pregnancy.

An act relating to preserving the right to abortion

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

The General Assembly intends this act to safeguard the right to abortion in Vermont by ensuring that right is not denied, restricted, or infringed by a governmental entity.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. Chapter 223 is added to read:

CHAPTER 223: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Subchapter 1. Freedom of Choice Act

§ 9493. INDIVIDUAL REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(a) Every individual has the fundamental right to choose or refuse contraception or sterilization.

(b) Every individual who becomes pregnant has the fundamental right to choose to carry a pregnancy to term, give birth to a child, or to have an abortion.

(c) A fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus shall not have independent rights under Vermont law.
§ 9494. INTERFERENCE WITH REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE PROHIBITED

(a) A public entity as defined in section 9496 of this title shall not, in the regulation or provision of benefits, facilities, services, or information, deny or interfere with an individual’s fundamental rights to choose or refuse contraception or sterilization or to choose to carry a pregnancy to term, to give birth to a child, or to obtain an abortion.

(b) No State or local law enforcement shall prosecute any individual for inducing, performing, or attempting to induce or perform the individual’s own abortion.

Subchapter 2. Prohibitions Relating to Access to Abortion

§ 9496. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Health care provider” means a person, partnership, or corporation, including a health care facility, that is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized by law to provide professional health care services in this State to an individual during that individual’s medical care, treatment, or confinement.

(2) “Public entity” means:

(A) the Legislative, Executive, or Judicial Branch of State Government, or any agency, department, office, or other subdivision of State government, or any elective or appointive officer or employee within any of those branches; or
(B) any municipality, or any agency, department, office, or other
subdivision of municipal government, or any elective or appointive officer or
employee within municipal government.

§ 9497. ABORTION; RESTRICTING ACCESS PROHIBITED

A public entity shall not:

(1) deprive a consenting individual of the choice of terminating the
individual’s pregnancy;

(2) interfere with or restrict, in the regulation or provision of benefits,
facilities, services, or information, the choice of a consenting individual to
terminate the individual’s pregnancy;

(3) prohibit a health care provider, acting within the scope of the health
care provider’s license, from terminating or assisting in the termination of a
patient’s pregnancy; or

(4) interfere with or restrict, in the regulation or provision of benefits,
facilities, services, or information, the choice of a health care provider acting
within the scope of the health care provider’s license to terminate or assist in
the termination of a patient’s pregnancy.

§ 9498. ENFORCEMENT

(a) An individual injured as a result of a violation of this chapter shall have
a private right of action in Superior Court against a public entity for injunctive
relief arising from the violation.
(b) In addition to any injunctive relief awarded, the court may award costs and reasonable attorney’s fees to an injured person who substantially prevails in an action brought under this section.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.