

~~Good Evening. My name is Steve Finner and I am a resident of Barre City. Some of you may remember me as a now retired lobbyist for organized labor and United Academics, the University of Vermont faculty union. However, I am long been a supporter of reproductive and parental rights and served as Vice President of the Planned Parenthood Affiliate in Bangor Maine over fifty years ago.~~

~~When the United States Supreme Court decided Roe v. Wade, no one anticipated the vicious attack on that decision which would take place and has continued since.~~

~~Now we are faced with the strong possibility that approximately half of the U.S. could soon greatly restrict abortion rights and other reproductive and health services.~~

~~Vermont can set an excellent example of what protections and safeguards are possible. Amending our state constitution is the best way to assure ongoing protection of reproductive freedom.~~

~~I hope this committee can move us in that direction by your passage of the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, also known as Prop 5.~~

~~I thank you for your service and for this opportunity to lend my voice to this proposal.~~

I would like to put on the record that I am strongly in favor of
Proposal 5: Proposed Amendment to the Vermont Constitution Regarding the Right to Personal Reproductive Freedom

It is such a fundamental right for women to chose what happens to their bodies. You have heard all the reasons why on so many different occasions I don't feel like I need to cite those reasons again. Suffice it to say, I expect our legislature to pass this again this legislative season so it can go out to the voters.

With appreciation, Judi Daly Moretown

I am an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, and I support the Reproductive Liberty Amendment (Prop 5), a proposed amendment to the Vermont Constitution that would protect every Vermonter's right to make their own reproductive decisions.

Within the past month, I have heard from friends and loved ones living in Vermont and elsewhere who have experienced the broad array of joys and sorrows that go along with reproductive choices and realities. For one same sex couple, it's the good news of a long-awaited baby born with the support of fertility treatments. For a friend, it's the sadness of miscarrying early in her pregnancy and navigating her health care options in the aftermath of that loss. For another couple, it's the difficult decision to abort a fetus after prenatal testing revealed an adverse health prognosis.

Each day people in all corners of our state face questions and decisions like these about their reproductive health. My faith affirms that bodily autonomy is

foundational to human dignity and self-determination. I believe that every person has a right to have or not have children, to raise one's children in safe and healthy environments, and to be free from oppression or shame in living out one's sexuality. Every person ought to be able to make decisions about their bodies and access health care according to their beliefs and values.

When my son was 5 years old, my spouse and I got pregnant a second time. After eight weeks, the embryo stopped growing and I did not carry that pregnancy through its full development. Instead, I was able to use my own sacred conscience, the consultation of my doctor and spouse, and the stirrings of my own heart to make the painful decision to have that miscarried pregnancy removed from my body. How grateful I am that I had that choice as heart-breaking as it was to make.

No matter your age, gender, religion, race, sexuality, or how much money you have in your bank account, we all have the right to make important decisions about our lives, our futures, and our bodies. With these very rights under attack in every corner of the country, the Reproductive Liberty Amendment is critically important to upholding our freedom and dignity.

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval
Unitarian Universalist minister
Montpelier, VT

Below please find a recent Op-Ed that I wrote for VT Digger in support of the Reproductive Liberty Amendment/Proposal 5. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions/concerns.

Warmly,
Lauren MacAfee, MD

I am an Obstetrician and Gynecologist in Vermont, with over 10 years of training and clinical practice in contraception, miscarriage management, and abortion. I am a long-time supporter of Reproductive Liberty Amendment (Prop 5), a proposed amendment to the Vermont constitution that would protect every Vermonter's right to make their own reproductive decisions.

Lately I've been sad to see commentaries by opponents of the Reproductive Liberty Amendment that contain false and misleading information about what the amendment does and does not do. The most absurd of these claims is that the amendment will somehow allow "abortion up until birth."

The term "abortion up until birth" is a political term, not a medical term. There is no such thing as an abortion up until birth, and it is irresponsible to imply otherwise. These words have been weaponized by anti-abortion activists to spread misinformation and control people's bodies.

Health care providers practice medicine under the guidance of both ethical principles and practice regulations at the individual, clinic, hospital, state and federal level. There currently are no state restrictions on the practice of abortion in Vermont and simply put, the Reproductive Liberty Amendment will not change how medicine is practiced in Vermont. What it will do is

ensure that individual patients, not politicians, will have the freedom to make their own reproductive health care decisions.

As a physician, I see that every person and every pregnancy is different. We need to acknowledge the complexities of medical decisions, and listen to and respect patients' and families' decisions. When someone has made the decision to have an abortion, they should be able to get one as soon as they decide, without facing restrictions that force them to delay care.

I provide comprehensive reproductive health care including wellness visits, routine obstetric care, contraception and abortion care in Vermont. I trust my patients to decide if and when they would like to parent, and I use my knowledge and skills to help them achieve their individual goals. These discussions are intimate and private and should be left to the patient and provider, free from government interference.

If the Reproductive Liberty Amendment is passed, my patients in Vermont will never have to bear the burdens that people in other states like Texas are forced to endure now to access safe, legal health care.

Unnecessary government restrictions can impede access and worsen health care disparities and inequities. We need to protect and support people's right to access all reproductive health care options. We all win if patients and their families have the right to plan their pregnancies, their education, their vocation, and contribute to society however they see fit.

The Reproductive Liberty Amendment will allow providers to continue to deliver exceptional care to their patients and allow us to best serve the people of Vermont. Do not be distracted by the false claims by those who oppose reproductive rights.

To the Editor: The Northfield News

Ms. Lamberton notes in the Northfield News (12/9/21 issue) that our Vermont Legislators want to be the first state in the nation to enshrine abortion and other procedures into our Constitution as an Amendment of "personal reproductive autonomy" (Proposal 5). There are many factors that I hope our legislators will consider before making their final vote to advance for a public referendum when the new Legislative session begins in January, 2022 - to ultimately put the issue before voters in November of 2022.

Before finalizing this irreversible model, consideration might be given to studying the long-term effects as related to the intensity and

duration of grief and loss suffered by men and women after an abortion. For those who counsel these men and women, the duration seems to be a lifetime. Consideration could also be given to questioning the loss of workforce to us if sixty five million babies have been aborted so far. Wouldn't they have been the workers who would logically have paid for future generation's social security and other needs? We should evaluate if this is a popular decision economically and ethically that we want more of. And finally, I would appreciate a stronger effort of empathy by leaders in our State to save lives, rather than work so hard to destroy them – to portray a finer image of Vermont while improving our commitment as it pertains to how we treat our most vulnerable.

Sara N.