

My name is Bill Schubart. Retired, I live in Hinesburg and am a regular columnist for VT Digger.

Abortion has been available in Vermont since Roe v. Wade was settled. I was formerly the Chair of Fletcher Allen Healthcare, now UVM Health Network. My chairmanship was well after the merger of two Catholic hospitals (DeGoesbriand and Fanny Allen) with Mary Fletcher. Out of that merger, came a tacit agreement between our hospital and Planned Parenthood regarding access to abortions for Vermont women who needed them. That agreement ensured that abortion was safe and legal.

More important, however, Prop 5 is vital to the privacy and wellbeing of all Vermonters. The assumption that the reproductive liberty amendment is just about abortions is wrong. Opponents will try and make it so. It's about privacy and Vermonters' right to manage their own choices with regard to family planning and wellbeing.

It's also about settled federal law. In the 1965 case of Griswold v. Connecticut (the case that made contraceptives legal). Justice William O. Douglas, writing for the 7-2 majority, described a "penumbra" of rights emanating from the Constitution, of which privacy was one. A "right to marital privacy" was an integral part of a more general right to privacy built upon several other rights explicitly defined, and it had been violated in this case by Connecticut's contraception law.

In short, the government has no right or compelling public interest in what happens in family planning. It is the sole purview of the family and their chosen medical and spiritual advisors.

Those who oppose abortion will be free to do so. The medical (physical and psychological) ethics around providing abortions will remain in place.

Every woman I know personally who has had an abortion struggled emotionally and intellectually with her decision and chose abortion out of necessity in considering the impact of dealing with an unwanted pregnancy and child.

I grew up in Morrisville and remember young girls disappearing mysteriously for a year at a time with varying excuses. We all knew what had happened and that they were at the Home for Unwed Mothers in Burlington. This began in junior high.

We cannot go back to the days of disappearing young women and back room abortions.

I urge you to pass the Reproductive Liberty Act and Thank you for your time and hard work.

Bill Schubart

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Black Lives Matter

"Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

\_Dylan Thomas

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