

HOW TO TURN
SUPPORTERS
OF ABORTION
ACCESS INTO
ACTIVISTS

NIRH

National Institute for
Reproductive Health

BUILDS POWER at the state and local level to change public policy, galvanize public support, and normalize women's decisions about abortion and contraception.

THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP MODEL, we provide state and local advocates with strategic guidance, hands-on support, and funding to create national change from the ground up.

NIRH ACTION FUND makes political change by conducting non-partisan issue advocacy and electoral engagement to advance reproductive health, rights, and justice across the country.

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The vast majority of people across the United States support abortion rights and access. They are highly motivated by the rollback of our reproductive freedoms, and can be mobilized to take action in favor of laws that support women's access to abortion care.

THIS MESSAGE TOOLKIT PROVIDES RESEARCH-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE ABOUT ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM IN ORDER TO:

ACTIVATE SUPPORTERS

by educating them about the real-life trend of anti-woman, anti-abortion laws

TAP INTO THE POSITIVE VALUES

that supporters already associate with abortion care

GENERATE ENERGY AND ACTION

in support of affirmative policies on abortion access

MESSAGE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

THE GOAL OF THIS PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH WAS TO CAPTURE THE VIEWS OF VOTERS OF VARYING RACIAL BACKGROUNDS, AGES, POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS, AND POSITIONS ON REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM AND, PARTICULARLY, ABORTION RIGHTS AND ACCESS

The recommendations in this toolkit were developed using data from the following public opinion research methods



RESEARCH
CONDUCTED BETWEEN
2015-2017



**38 FOCUS GROUPS
ACROSS NINE STATES**



X 1000

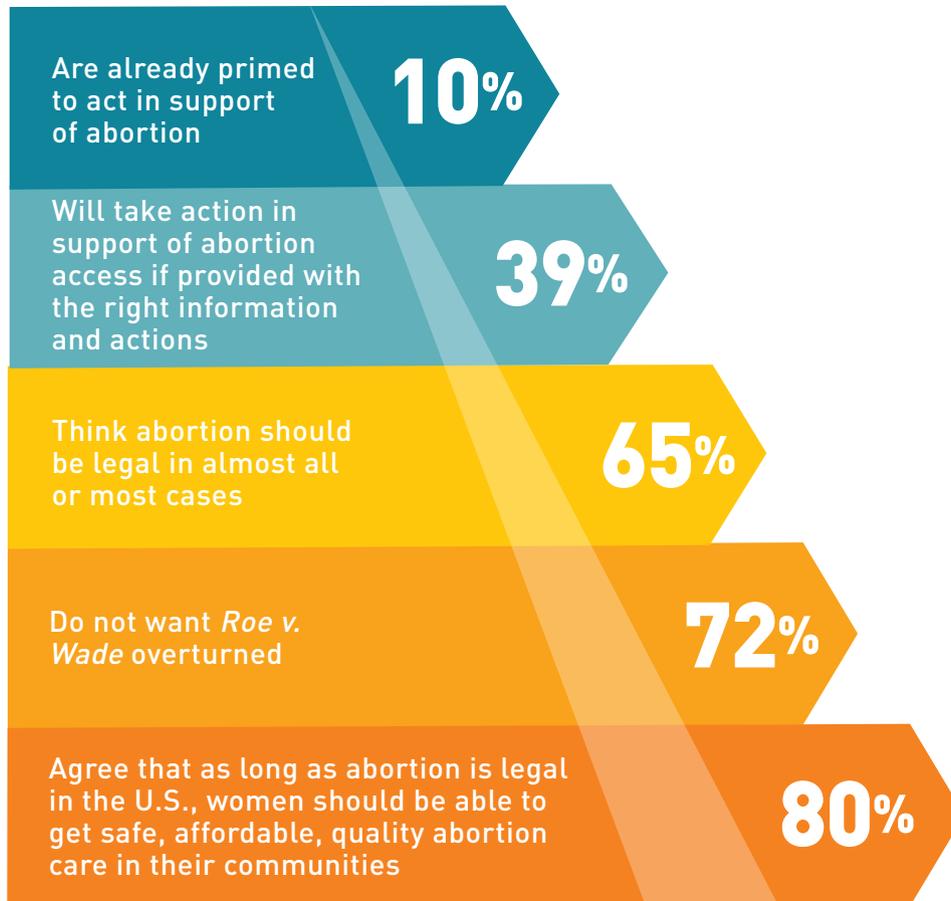
POLLS CONDUCTED AMONG
NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE
SAMPLES OF 1,000 VOTERS EACH

RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED BY PERRYUNDEM RESEARCH + COMMUNICATION FOR



ABORTION IS NOT AS DIVISIVE AS YOU MIGHT THINK

NIRH'S RESEARCH PROVES THERE IS
WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR ABORTION ACCESS



87%

While voters' views are nuanced, 87% are secure in their feelings on abortion and don't "struggle" with how they feel about abortion

TAKEAWAY

LESS PERSUASION, MORE MOTIVATION!

With so much support for abortion access, focus on the people who can be moved to act on that support.

MEET THE **ACTION TAKERS** AND THE **MOTIVATABLES**

10% OF VOTERS ARE **ACTION TAKERS**

This group forms a core base of abortion access supporters who will take action. Politicians are often pulled to the right by a small percentage of voters with extreme views on abortion. But the action takers who strongly support abortion access can act as a counterweight, rivaling the enthusiasm and the political power of those who want to push abortion out of reach.

29% OF VOTERS ARE **MOTIVATABLES**

This group is the prime audience for motivational messaging to take action based on their support of abortion access. With the right information, messaging, and guidance on what they can do, this group will take action in support of abortion access and could truly tip the scales.

ACTION TAKERS		MOTIVATABLES
<p>76% Support legal abortion in almost all cases</p>	<p>ABORTION SUPPORTERS</p>	<p>Support legal abortion in almost all cases 52%</p> <p>Support legal abortion in most cases 48%</p>
<p>DEMOCRATS Likely to be Democratic voters, although 13% were Trump voters in 2016</p>	<p>VOTERS</p>	<p>Likely to be Democratic voters, although 17% were Trump voters in 2016 DEMOCRATS</p>
<p>87% Think the right to abortion is at risk</p>	<p>THINK ABORTION IS AT RISK</p>	<p>Think the right to abortion is at risk 75%</p>
<p>56% Have contacted an elected official since the 2016 election and are already active politically</p>	<p>POLITICALLY ACTIVE</p>	<p>Are not already politically active, but are talking with friends and family members about politics 76%</p> <p>Are paying more attention to the news than usual 68%</p>
<p>Mostly women, more educated, and more racially diverse than the electorate overall</p>	<p>OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS</p>	<p>Roughly representative of the electorate in terms of racial and gender breakdowns</p>

By using this three-step approach, we can
ENGAGE, MOTIVATE, AND ACTIVATE
supporters to take action

1. INFORM
2. PIVOT
3. ACTIVATE

1. INFORM

DRIVE ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

MANY VOTERS ARE SHOCKED AND ANGRY WHEN THEY LEARN ABOUT THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF THE LAWS STATES HAVE PASSED AGAINST ABORTION IN RECENT YEARS

Arming them with information about the attacks on abortion access motivates supporters to take action

63% BELIEVE THE RECENT TREND OF LAWS AGAINST ABORTION IS GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION



PRESENT UNBIASED FACTS ABOUT THE NATIONAL TREND AND EXTENT OF ANTI-ABORTION LAWS

EXPLAIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF ATTACKS ON ABORTION ACCESS

TIE THE NATIONAL ATTACKS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR STATE

TRY THIS:

“ THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS ARE WORKING TO BAN ABORTION, DEFUND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, CUT MATERNITY COVERAGE OUT OF HEALTH PLANS, LIMIT ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE BIRTH CONTROL, AND PROHIBIT MEDICAID FROM COVERING ABORTION CARE, WHILE POLITICIANS IN MOST STATES ARE MAKING IT HARDER TO GET ABORTIONS.”

GIVE DETAILS OF ANTI-ABORTION LAWS IN YOUR STATE, AND SITUATE THEM IN THE BROADER CONTEXT

START WITH “DID YOU KNOW” TO INVITE LISTENERS TO LEARN MORE

EMPHASIZE THAT THE RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN “QUIETLY” PASSED OR PROPOSED TO SHOW THE CONCERTED PLOT BY ANTI-ABORTION POLITICIANS

GIVE STATE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

TRY THIS:

“**DID YOU KNOW** SINCE 2011, POLITICIANS HAVE **QUIETLY PASSED** 401* LAWS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO TRY TO PREVENT ANY WOMAN FROM GETTING AN ABORTION? THESE LAWS LIE TO HER, DELAY HER, MAKE ABORTION CARE COST MORE THAN IT SHOULD, LET PEOPLE HARASS HER, AND CLOSE NEARBY CLINICS. **HERE IN [STATE], POLITICIANS HAVE PROPOSED/PASSED [X] RESTRICTIONS JUST IN THE LAST [X] YEARS.**”

NOTE

When possible, cite numbers that are both specific and not round, as they are more believable to voters (e.g., “23 bills” not “more than 20 bills”).

EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL AND STATE TRENDS ON AN INDIVIDUAL WOMAN

“SHAME, PRESSURE, AND PUNISH” ARE A GOOD SHORTHAND TO DESCRIBE THE RANGE OF ATTACKS ON ABORTION

TRY THIS:

“ THESE LAWS AGAINST ABORTION **SHAME, PRESSURE, AND PUNISH** A WOMAN WHO HAS DECIDED TO HAVE ONE.”

NOTE

NIRH research indicated that it is most effective and clear to refer to a “woman” when describing the need for abortion care. However, we recognize that other people, such as transgender men and gender non-conforming people, can become pregnant and need reproductive health care.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

Your audience needs to see for themselves the extent of the laws in your state in order to understand the full context of the attacks on abortion access. A visual display of unbiased information will allow your audience to draw their own conclusions. The sample timeline on the right shows a proven method for depicting the multitude of anti-abortion laws in a state.

A LIST OR GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF ALL THE ABORTION RESTRICTIONS PASSED IN YOUR STATE SINCE 1973 CAN:



SHOW EXACTLY HOW your state has slid backward since abortion was legalized in 1973



PLACE EACH INDIVIDUAL RESTRICTION in the context of the concerted effort to push abortion out of reach

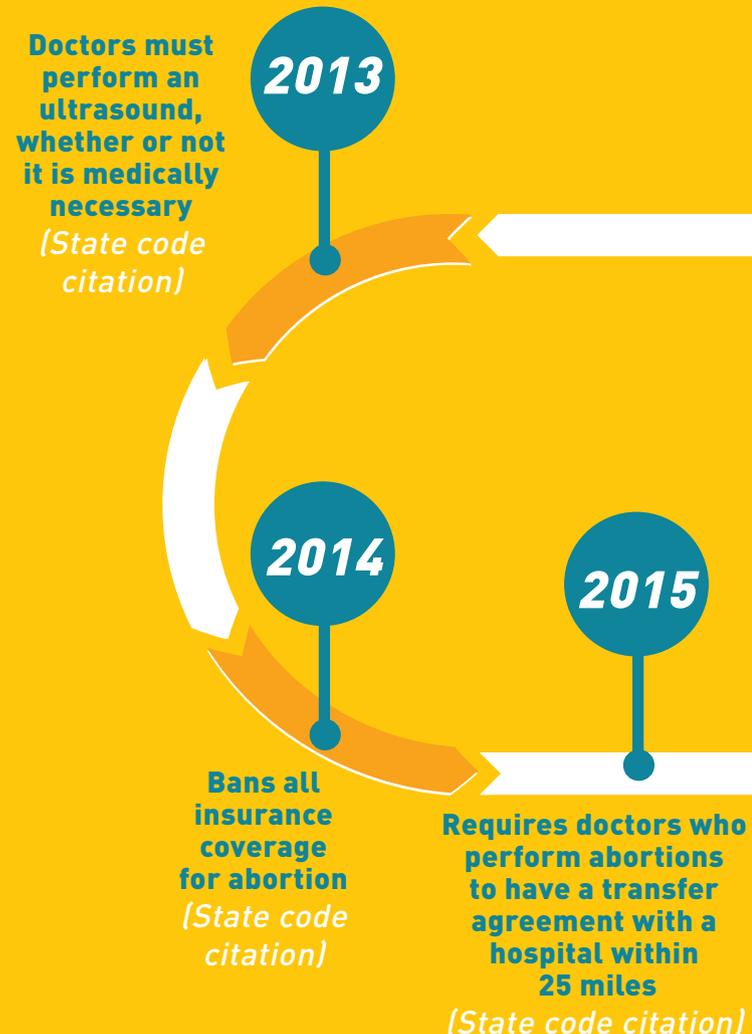


ILLUSTRATE THE TREND AND INTENTIONS of legislators who are attacking abortion access, in a way that is believable and viewers can see for themselves

NOTE

If your state has not recently passed or proposed anti-abortion laws, using a timeline from a neighboring state that is more hostile can illustrate the threat to access and motivate listeners to support proactive, positive abortion laws in your state.

SAMPLE TIMELINE



1973

All women have the right to abortion and Medicaid covers abortion
(Roe v. Wade)

1979

State Medicaid cannot cover abortion
(State code citation)

1983

Hospitals and individuals can refuse to provide an abortion for any reason
(State code citation)

2006

Doctors are required by the state to give medically inaccurate information, like that abortion causes breast cancer
(State code citation)

2000

A minor seeking an abortion must have consent from both parents or a judge
(State code citation)

1999

A woman must wait 24 hours before having an abortion
(State code citation)

2016

Makes it illegal for public hospitals to perform abortions
(State code citation)

2017

Bans abortion at 20 weeks with only narrow exceptions if the woman's physical health or life is at risk
(State code citation)

2018

Makes it illegal for organizations that receive rape crisis funds to talk about abortion or refer survivors to abortion services
(State code citation)

2. PIVOT

TAP INTO VALUES THAT CENTER THE WOMAN

VOTERS ULTIMATELY WANT A WOMAN'S ABORTION EXPERIENCE TO BE POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE

START THE CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN WHO HAS DECIDED TO HAVE AN ABORTION AND THEN FOCUS ON WHAT THAT EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE LIKE

TRY THIS:

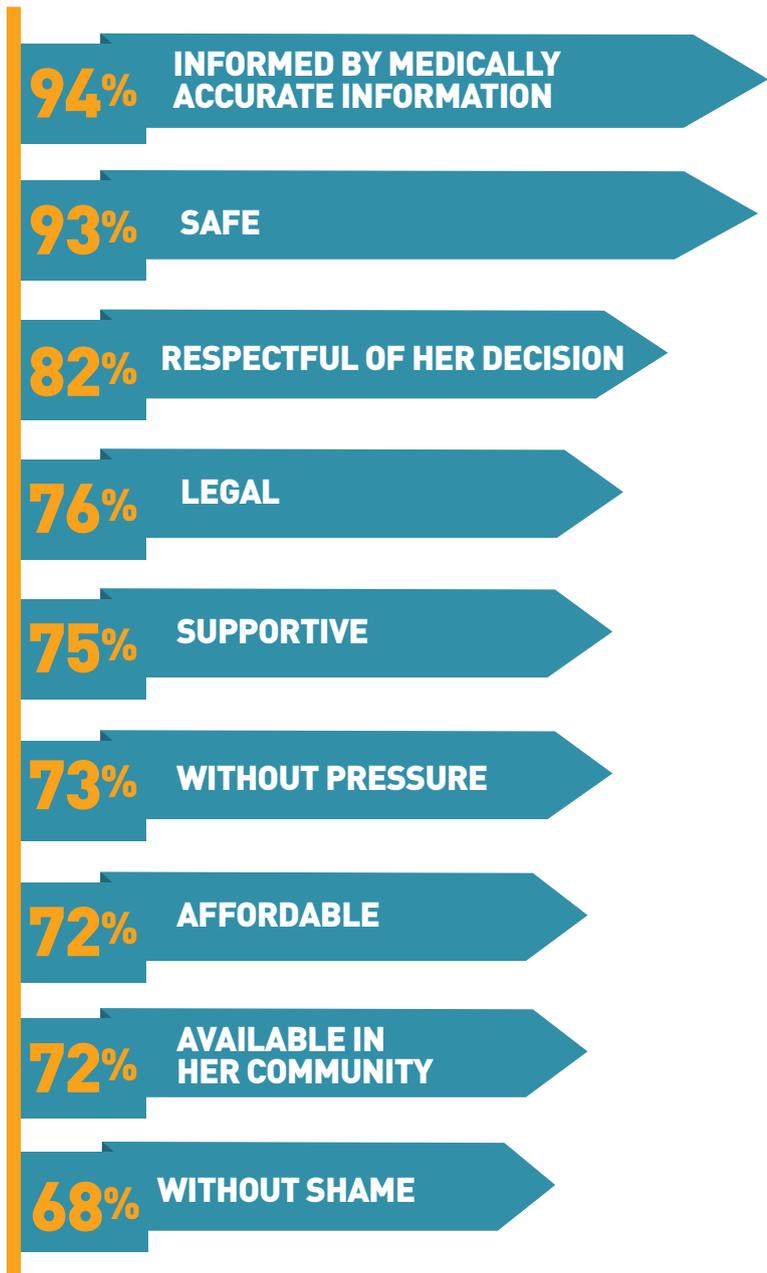
“ WHEN A WOMAN HAS DECIDED TO HAVE AN ABORTION, SHE SHOULD HAVE SUPPORT AND RESPECT, AND HER EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE WITHOUT SHAME OR PRESSURE. **”**

NOTE

Beginning with “when a woman has decided to have an abortion” allows the listener to bypass judgment about why a woman is having an abortion.

ALL VOTERS, INCLUDING SOME WHO SAY THEY THINK ABORTION SHOULD BE ILLEGAL, WANT A WOMAN WHO HAS DECIDED TO HAVE AN ABORTION TO HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

They believe her experience should be:



MOVE FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE

PIVOT TO PROACTIVE ABORTION POLICIES THAT EXPAND ACCESS AND AFFIRM A SUPPORTIVE EXPERIENCE

TRY THIS:

“ GOING FORWARD, WE NEED TO PASS LAWS THAT RESPECT, SUPPORT, AND EMPOWER WOMEN. AND WE WILL NOT STOP UNTIL EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO RESPECTFUL, QUALITY, AND AFFORDABLE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE, INCLUDING ABORTION.”

Voters are more likely to support specific proactive laws that expand abortion access after hearing about restrictions on abortion access.



KEY VALUES

THE VALUE THAT VOTERS MOST ASSOCIATE WITH THEIR OWN VIEWS ABOUT ABORTION:

- ▶ **Control over our bodies**

VOTERS WHO SUPPORT ABORTION IN ALMOST ALL OR MOST CASES ARE ALSO MOTIVATED BY THE VALUES OF:

- ▶ **Control over our bodies, our families, and our life's path**

THE VALUES THAT VOTERS WANT TO BE REFLECTED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING AN ABORTION:

- ▶ **Respect**
- ▶ **Support**
- ▶ **Safety**
- ▶ **Affordability**
- ▶ **Availability in the community**

TAP INTO VALUES

CONNECT TO THE BROAD VALUES THAT MANY HOLD DEAR, AND SITUATE ABORTION SQUARELY IN THE CENTER OF THOSE VALUES

TAKE THE LONG VIEW OF THE POSITIVE IMPACT ABORTION ACCESS CAN HAVE ACROSS A LIFETIME

TRY THIS:

“ LET’S WORK TO MAKE SURE WE ALL HAVE THE **RIGHTS, FREEDOMS, AND OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTROL OUR LIVES** AT THE MOST BASIC LEVEL: **OUR BODIES, OUR FAMILIES, AND OUR LIFE’S PATH** – AND THAT INCLUDES THE RIGHT AND ABILITY TO HAVE AN ABORTION.”

3. ACTIVATE

MOVE LISTENERS FROM PASSIVE SUPPORT TO ENTHUSIASTIC ACTION

USE MOTIVATING LANGUAGE TO ENGAGE VOTERS TO ACT

SHOW THAT IT'S NOT ONLY TIME TO STOP THE ATTACKS ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE, BUT THAT OUR LAWS NEED TO GO IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

TRY THIS:

“ IT IS TIME TO STOP POLITICIANS FROM IMPOSING THEIR PERSONAL BELIEFS AND ANTI-ABORTION VIEWS ON OTHERS. **IT'S TIME WE MOVE FORWARD ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS – AND THAT INCLUDES ACCESS TO ABORTION.**”

HARNESS NEW ACTIVISTS' ENERGY WITH LANGUAGE THAT ENCOURAGES THEM TO ACT

“MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD” / “FIGHT BACK”
“STAND UP” / “TAKE OUR POWER BACK”

GIVE SPECIFIC AND VARIED ACTIONS



“CALL YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS NOW”



“TWEET AT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE”



“TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK
ABORTION ACCESS SHOULD LOOK LIKE”



“SHARE THIS MESSAGE ON FACEBOOK”

NOTE

“Make our voices heard” was the top motivating message among most demographic groups, except those that support abortion in almost all cases, who preferred “Take our power back.”

By implementing these recommendations, advocates can reveal to the public and policymakers that the majority of voters – more than 70% – **SUPPORT A WOMAN'S ABILITY TO GET SAFE, RESPECTFUL, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY ABORTION CARE, WITHOUT PRESSURE**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

INFORM

GIVE FACTUAL INFORMATION, NOT HYPERBOLE.

THE LAWS PASSED AND PROPOSED ARE COMPELLING. THERE IS NO NEED TO EXAGGERATE THE THREATS TO ABORTION.

USE SPECIFIC NUMBERS. GIVE ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NUMBER OF RESTRICTIONS ON ABORTION ACCESS. SHOW THAT EACH RESTRICTION IS PART OF A TREND.

PIVOT

FOCUS ON A WOMAN WHO HAS DECIDED TO HAVE AN ABORTION. BYPASS JUDGMENT ABOUT A WOMAN'S DECISION-MAKING.

FOCUS ON WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AND THE POSITIVE VALUES THAT SHOULD DEFINE HER EXPERIENCE IN HAVING AN ABORTION.

SHIFT FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE. EXPLAIN THAT OUR LAWS SHOULD CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR A POSITIVE ABORTION EXPERIENCE.

ACTIVATE

THE TIME IS NOW. LISTENERS AGREE THAT ATTACKS ON ABORTION HAVE GONE TOO FAR. EMPHASIZE THAT THE TIME IS NOW TO GO IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.

GIVE SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS. TELL LISTENERS EXACTLY WHAT THEY CAN DO TO TAKE ACTION – MAKE PHONE CALLS, SHARE STORIES, TALK TO THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS, ETC.



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