

A new abortion law limits women's freedom



By Haley Hawkins
STAFF WRITER

Thought that the basic freedom of choice had already been battered and bruised enough? Apparently not.

Controversy surrounds the issue yet again, after a decision made by the General Assembly, a decision that further amends North Carolina's already stringent abortion laws.

The new amendment, which passed despite the scarcely cumbersome hurdle of Gov. Bev Perdue's veto, would require abortion providers to display and describe fetal images prior to the abortion. It would also require a twenty-four hour waiting period for women choosing to seek an abortion, according to the Los Angeles Times.

The Woman's Right to Know Act, as it is so fondly called in the Republican-dominated General Assembly, has stirred the pot in terms of national legal ramifications. So much so that it has garnered a hefty lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and Planned Parenthood.

"Politicians have no business forcing healthcare providers to push a political agenda on their patients," said Bebe Anderson, senior counsel for the Center

for Reproductive Rights.

Indeed, lawmakers don't hesitate to put the constitutional rights of all parties involved in danger. Not only would doctors be expected to provide a voice of legislative ideology to their patients, but women seeking an abortion face a shockingly blatant intrusion on their private lives and health decisions.

"This bill keeps abortion legal," said State Rep. Ruth Samuelson, Republican from Charlotte. "It keeps abortion safe. And, by golly, we know it helps make it more rare. It is still her choice. It makes it her informed choice."

If there is one thing that will keep back-alley abortions a steady presence in our society, it is the criminalization that this abortion law imposes upon women who simply wish to exercise their freedom of choice.

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If lawmakers truly want to make abortion an entirely safe process, the answer is not through treating these women as deviant criminals.

This safety can only be reached by giving them the respect and sensitivity they so rightfully deserve.

The Woman's Right to Know Act, according to Katy Parker, legal director for the ACLU of NC Legal Foundation, "forces a doctor ... to describe the embryo or fetus and put pictures in front

of the woman's face even if the woman says she doesn't want to see them."

Call me crazy, but this pathway to "informed choice" sounds a lot more like coercion and harassment.

"(The ultrasound provision) forces patients to allow their bodies to be treated as the source for government-mandated speech, treats women as less than fully competent adults, and chills the exercise of constitutional rights," the lawsuit claims.

This exposes the root of all the uproar. For, what kind of law would advocate this intimidating provision?

Answer: the kind of law that sees women as less. The kind of law that treats women as children.

Women as a whole are no strangers to underestimation, even, surprisingly enough, in regards to their health. It

is dumbfounding that a detached lawmaker can even start to regard a woman's choice to have an abortion as a hasty, inconsiderate act.

If one were to grant women recognition of their full competent faculties, this new law would remain as nothing but a residual, unjust punishment.

I dare say that, if men were the subjects in question, their choice would be deemed as nothing but just that: a conscious decision.

Why should women be deprived of the same respect?

U.S. District Court Judge Catherine Eagles, who is also the former Superior Court Judge of Guilford County, has issued a preliminary injunction, blocking immediate enactment of the law. In the meantime, the decisive validity of women in the eyes of state law must continue to hang in the balance.

Staff Editorial

Differing opinions deserve respect

This Sunday will mark the one-year anniversary of the Rally to Restore Sanity in Washington, D.C. This event seemed to resonate here at Guilford as students traveled by bus and car to attend, most of them weary-eyed and sleep-deprived from the long night's trek.

This rally urged people to face different viewpoints with tolerance and mature debate. Unfortunately, it is often the nature of debate to be immature. It is easier to degrade and ignore an opponent rather than engage them reasonably and with an open mind.

Without thinking about it, we often label and marginalize opponents in order to attribute differing opinions to a narrow-minded and radical stance. If you can cast the person you disagree with as a racist, fascist, socialist, homophobe, or something equally stigmatized, you have less reason to take them seriously.

At Guilford, where we tend to think of ourselves as welcoming, it can be easy to forget that we are capable of such degrading public discourse. An example can be found in the response to a recent Guilfordian article arguing in favor of Greek life.

This view is probably not popular at Guilford, so dissenting feedback was inevitable and even welcome. What should never be welcome, however, was the vitriol that accompanied some of the feedback.

One commenter said, "Obviously you don't belong here because you want a sorority experience ... Oh, by the way, High Point is right down the road."

Several other comments, both on the website and those The Guilfordian received via email, lacked the respect for the article's writer that one would hope for in mature discourse. The writer was put down without consideration, accused of not knowing what she was talking about and not doing her job as a journalist.

People can and should disagree on issues. Our response when someone disagrees with us, however, should never be to tell someone that they don't belong here. Such rhetoric does nothing to resolve a disagreement, and only advances an us-versus-them mentality. Moreover, the idea that someone who has a minority viewpoint may not belong in a community that prides itself on diversity is a contradiction.

Guilford's summary of its value of diversity reads, "We are committed to creating an academic institution where a variety of persons and perspectives are welcome."

If we immediately shut down varying perspectives, then our commitment to diversity is half-hearted at best and non-existent at worst.

Though we may be naturally threatened by views that challenge our own, let us respond with maturity, respect, and open-mindedness, rather than hostility, degradation, and condemnation. At a place that can be homogeneous more often than not, it is up to all of us to actively rise above our base instincts and initiate a dialogue that elevates and informs all parties.

It's the only sane thing to do.

Letter to the Editor

Blair was an inappropriate choice

A READER'S RESPONSE TO COVERAGE OF TONY BLAIR'S VISIT.

How is it that Guilford College provides space for mass murderers to voice their opinions on domestic and foreign policy? Isn't Guilford supposed to support peace, human rights and, above all, justice? None of these things were allowed when the Clinton administration basically ordered the bombing of Kosovo through their surrogate, NATO. As evidence clearly showed back then, the bombing of Kosovo caused the vast crimes that ended up taking place, not vice versa.

At the same time that the Clinton administration waged its "humanitarian war" in Kosovo, it completely ignored the massive killings and human rights violations of union members, community organizers and political dissidents in Colombia (armed by the

U.S. back then and presently) and the Kurds in Turkey (in fact a NATO member at the time that received vast amount of US military aid). The U.S. does not like to report its own crimes, a recurring theme throughout history which we seem to ignore over and over again.

As for Mr. Blair, I don't think I need to go into that much detail, unless people at Guilford have already forgotten the phony reasons Bush and Blair gave for going to Iraq and the destruction we have done there since then. Just in human lives, over a million civilians have died in Iraq up to now.

Finally, The Guilfordian did a stellar job giving extra positive coverage of this mass murderer, chiming in that Blair correctly identified a lot of the current political problems we face today. What The Guilfordian forgot to add was that Blair is one of those problems.

-Daniel McCurdy '10