



California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

Post Office Box 412225, Los Angeles, California 90041 • 213.270.5258

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2007

Contact:

Rocio Córdoba
(213) 270-5258

U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Disregards Women's Health and Safety

Decision Creates Additional Barrier to Quality Health Care for Low-Income Women of Color

LOS ANGELES, CA -- California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) issued the following response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 5-4 decision upholding the federal abortion ban in the cases *Gonzales v. Planned Parenthood* and *Gonzales v. Carhart* (April 18, 2007):

"The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the *Gonzales* cases sends the deeply disturbing message that women's health, autonomy and dignity are dispensable in our society," said CLRJ Executive Director, Rocio Córdoba. "By upholding a dangerously vague law that lacks an exception for women's health, the Court's majority opinion disregards 30 years of well-settled Supreme Court precedent that recognizes women's health as being paramount. Instead, the Court replaces the decisions of trained medical professionals with those of legislators."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's dissenting opinion found the Court's decision "alarming" on several grounds, stating that "the Court deprives women of the right to make an autonomous choice, even at the expense of their safety."

Leading medical associations opposed the federal ban, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which represents 90 percent of all ob-gyn specialists in the United States.

"In addition to placing women's health and safety at grave risk, the Court's opinion fails to respect women's right to self-determination. By seeking to protect women from making a choice they may 'regret' or do not understand, the opinion furthers outdated stereotypes about women's role in society and their ability to make well-informed decisions about their health. This line of thinking sets a dangerous precedent for all who value justice and autonomy – not just for women, but for all people in a democracy," Córdoba added.

Justice Ginsburg's dissent recognized that challenges to abortion restrictions "center on a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature." Justice Ginsburg added that the Court's "[w]ay of thinking reflects ancient notions about women's place in the family and under the Constitution – ideas that have long since been discredited."

"We are deeply concerned about the effect of the *Gonzales* decision on all women, and in particular the increased harm that will befall the most disenfranchised women in our society – including California's Latinas -- who face cultural, linguistic and economic barriers, systemic discrimination, and have the least access to quality health services," Córdoba stated. "By failing to recognize the health, safety and autonomy of all women, the *Gonzales* decision creates yet another legal barrier to the health and well-being of our communities.

"CLRJ supports the right of all women to access the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion, without legal or other systemic barriers that place their health and safety at risk," Córdoba added. "We further believe that reproductive health and rights cannot be viewed in isolation, but rather must be addressed in the context of other issues that affect Latinas' health and well-being, including their rights to equality and self-determination."

While the Supreme Court upheld a dangerously vague law that lacks an exception for women's health, it did not ban all second trimester abortion procedures. Women considering or seeking abortion services should consult with a health care provider to determine their options for safe and legal care. For more information about accessing safe and legal abortion care in California, women may call ACCESS at 800-376-4636 (en Español, 888-442-2247).

#

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) is a California-based policy and advocacy organization whose mission is to advance California Latinas' reproductive health and rights within a social justice and human rights framework. CLRJ strives to ensure that policy developments are reflective of the priority needs of Latinas, their families and their communities. CLRJ advances its mission through targeted, culturally-based policy advocacy, coalition-building, community education and strategic communications strategies that further its core policy goals and are specifically geared toward educating and mobilizing Latina/o constituents, both on the policy level and within target Latina/o communities.