

Using our Voices to Act for Women in Washington... and at Home

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Women's lives are at the center of a national crisis in access to abortion care. States have passed 288 restrictions on abortion care in the last six years – harmful, medically unnecessary laws that have shut down clinics, shamed women for their decisions, and made it so that whether our constitutional rights are protected or not depends on our zip code. As a result, all too often, women can't always get the care they need and deserve, and our autonomy, health and safety are put at risk.

Fortunately, we all have the opportunity to be part of the solution. By telling our own stories, by demanding our rights be respected, and by fighting for access to the full spectrum of safe, legal, high quality reproductive health care, we can promote positive, proactive policy change. The power that's created when we use our own voice to speak up for justice was evidenced in March, when thousands gathered to rally in front of the Supreme Court during oral arguments in [Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt](#), the most significant abortion case the Supreme Court has heard in nearly 25 years. The crowd was moved to tears and cheers –bolstered and inspired – as presenters spoke from a personal place about the need to protect abortion access.



But just like there is a role for the Courts in guaranteeing our Constitutional rights, there is a role for legislators to guarantee our rights with proactive policies – and for us to let them know this is a priority. Introduced in response to the onslaught of state abortion restrictions, the [Women's Health Protection Act](#) is designed to enforce and protect the right of every woman to decide for herself whether to continue or end a pregnancy, regardless of where she lives. This federal bill, which has broad support in the House and Senate, would prohibit states from imposing restrictions on reproductive health care that apply to no similar medical care, interfere with patient's personal decision making, and block access to safe, legal abortion care. This includes clinic shutdown laws (including the regulations at issue in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*); laws forcing women to undergo ultrasounds and endure waiting periods for no medical reason; and bans on abortion prior to viability, among others.

The Women's Health Protection Act has inspired the launch of [Act for Women](#), a campaign of local, state and national organizations that stand together in support of the bill. And each Congress, dozens of advocates, health care providers, activists, faith voices and more come to Washington, DC for an advocacy day to lift up the bill. This constellation of voices together,

sitting with a Member of Congress, speaking from different perspectives but unified and uncompromising about the need for safe, legal access to abortion care, is powerful. It has motivated Members of Congress to support the bill, and it has impacted the lobby day participants themselves, allowing them to meet others from different parts of the movement and empowering them to continue raising their unique voice.



If we're truly going to make the constitutional right to abortion care lasting and meaningful for everyone in this country it's going to require all of us speaking up, whether it's at a meeting in Washington, back home at a table with community organizers, or at a gathering of family and friends. Let's stop putting women's lives at the center of a crisis and instead, use our voices to make a *positive* impact on women's lives.