

Factsheet: The Reproductive Health Act



NARAL
Pro-Choice New York

What is the Reproductive Health Act?

The Reproductive Health Act (RHA) is a bill that will update New York State's outdated abortion laws, first passed in 1970. The RHA will codify in New York State law all the rights that are guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*, ensuring that women have a fundamental right to control their own sexual and reproductive lives.

Why is New York's current abortion law inadequate?

New York was the first state to legalize abortion in 1970—before *Roe v. Wade* was even decided. Legalizing abortion was a trailblazing move, but lawmakers haven't updated those laws in **39 years**. The current laws are outdated because they **do not guarantee** the right to an abortion if a woman's health is in danger and **treat abortion as a criminal matter**, instead of as a health care decision.

What will the Reproductive Health Act do?

The RHA:

- gives women control over their reproductive lives—including the right to choose or refuse birth control and the right to continue or end a pregnancy;
- amends the health code to make abortion a matter of public health, not a criminal exception;
- states for the first time in New York history that abortion must be an option at any point during pregnancy if a woman's health is in danger.

Why does New York need the Reproductive Health Act?

Right now, we depend on *Roe v. Wade* to guarantee our reproductive rights. But the Supreme Court is only one justice away from having an anti-choice majority. Even with its current makeup, the Court has banned an abortion procedure, even if a woman's health is in danger. The rights protected by *Roe* are so essential that they need to be written into state law.

How can New York reclaim our leadership on pro-choice legislation?

State legislatures across the country have enacted over 450 bills that would ban or restrict abortion, some of which are a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*. All it takes is one of these challenges to reach the Supreme Court, and *Roe* could be overturned. Seven states have already passed laws like the Reproductive Health Act. New York needs to reclaim our rightful place as a pro-choice leader by passing this bill.

Why now?

New Yorkers overwhelmingly support a woman's right to decide when and whether to have a child. In fact, three-quarters of New York voters support the Reproductive Health Act—even after hearing arguments against the bill. The November 2008 elections brought a Democratic majority with pro-choice leadership to Albany. We must seize this opportunity to change New York's abortion laws.

The Reproductive Health Act—what New York needs, and what New Yorkers want