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Burt: Abortion is health care, and Gordon was right to veto HB 148

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The Wyoming Freedom Caucus has united in the condemnation of Gov. Mark Gordon for his veto of House Bill 148, “Regulation of abortions,” and raised concerns “about the need for Wyoming to return to our three-branch system of government.” (4-9-24 Cowboy State Daily guest column by Rep. Rachel Rodriguez-Williams).

It is hard to decipher the meaning of this statement. The veto power of the governor is one of the supports the three-branch system of government stands on; it helps ensure a system of checks and balances, and prevents one branch from having too much power. Governor Gordon vetoed a flawed bill that was highly likely to involve additional litigation for the state.



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The legislative committee testimony on HB 148 from medical providers was definitive and clear that TRAP bills (targeted regulation of abortion providers) are not medically necessary. Not a single medical provider testified in favor of this bill. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists opposes TRAP bills as improperly regulating medicine and advancing no improvement of patient safety or quality of care.

Abortion is an extremely safe procedure — much safer than giving birth. This legislation sought to further burden the rights of women to reproductive health care. The goal of HB 148 was to shut down the single provider of surgical abortions in the state.

In addition to requiring unnecessary medical, building and staffing requirements for surgical centers, a bill that did not pass requiring an ultrasound and 48-hour waiting period prior to a medication abortion was grafted onto HB 148. This is another medically unnecessary tactic to prevent women from accessing abortion care.

Freedom Caucus members, none of whom are physicians, have often given their opinion that abortion is not health care and is not safe. Both statements are false. Medical personnel and facilities participate in every area of female reproduction, and abortion is an important part of health care for women.

The status of abortion care subsequent to the Dobbs decision has revealed the critical danger for women when their medical care is put in the hands of the legislature and taken out of the hands of physicians. Abortion must be available to not only save women's lives and reproductive health, but to allow families to make decisions regarding their reproductive future.

Abortion is an important part of reproductive health care for women that must be available to women and their health care providers without interference from overreaching legislators intent on forcing their religion and personal beliefs on the citizens of Wyoming. The radical anti-woman, anti-abortion agenda of the Freedom Caucus does nothing to ensure or enhance the safety of women's health.

These issues are not the business of the government, but are issues that require privacy and personal deliberation. At one point in time, a wiser Supreme Court and a wiser Wyoming Legislature understood that.

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