



Action Alert

August 2022

From the Desk of NFDW President Gail Buckner

August 7, 2022

A WINNING STRATEGY FROM KANSAS

Since the Republican-leaning Supreme Court overturned *Roe v Wade*, a wave of ill-intended and misguided legislation has been enacted around our country. Women and families lives have been shattered. Even a 10-year-old girl had to be taken across state lines to receive an abortion.

President Biden has issued two executive orders for the purpose of helping protect the healthcare of women. He has focused on the federal law that mandates persons needing emergency care shall receive treatment.

In the midst of all this chaos, the Kansas Federation of Democratic Women worked closely with other like-minded groups to defeat a constitutional amendment that would have made abortion illegal in Kansas. You need to hear from Kansas President Candace Ayars and take action on the strategy and tactics that soundly brought down the Kansas ballot question.

From the desk of Kansas Federation of Democratic Women Candace Ayars:

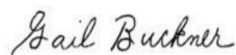
The voters of the state of Kansas successfully fended off an attempt to amend their state constitution to allow legislators to pass draconian abortion laws as have been passed in numerous other states, including Texas, Oklahoma, Idaho, South Dakota, Arizona, and Florida. Radical and extremist Republican legislators placed a constitutional amendment on the primary ballot to sidestep the 2019 Kansas Supreme Court decision that the Kansas constitution guarantees to women “inalienable rights” including personal autonomy for making decisions about their bodies and health. Generally, few Kansans vote in primary elections, practically ensuring passage of this amendment to enable the legislature to bring Kansas into alignment with the Republican Party Platform to ban all abortions. Many state leaders had already conceded the amendment’s passage because of historically low turnout in primary elections.

Prochoice advocates set out to change the primary voting pattern in Kansas, but we had to organize quickly and work together collaboratively since no one group had the members or resources to mount an organized Get Out the Vote campaign specifically to defeat the amendment. Led by Planned Parenthood, a bipartisan nonprofit coalition was formed and prochoice advocates across the state joined together to block the amendment. Each group contributed in different ways: fundraising for media ads, donations for anti-amendment merchandise, design of media messages, organizing rallies across the state, leveraging earned media, phone banking, postcard writing, writing letters to newspapers, and door-to-door canvassing. These activities began and continued incessantly until the polls closed on August 2nd.

Importantly, we did not assume everyone was in agreement about all aspects of abortion. We went everywhere and spoke to everyone who would listen, including areas of the state thought to be hostile toward prochoice. The primary focus was countering the lies being propagated by anti-abortion groups. We did this by explaining the unintended consequences of the amendment to women's health, that legislators were interfering in medical decisions of doctors, how women in other states were suffering under abortion bans with no exceptions, and educating voters, especially the unaffiliated ones, about their right to vote in the primary and how to do it. Most importantly we emphasized that Kansas did not need the amendment because abortion is already regulated in our state. What made it work was everyone's focus on the outcome with no one group claiming any credit, but rather working together under the banner of Kansans for Constitution Freedom. And we trusted the polls that showed, if voters are asked, they overwhelmingly reject total abortion bans.

The defeat of the extremist legislators has changed the political rhetoric in Kansas. State party leaders have backed away from continued assaults on women's rights. At the moment, abortion is protected in Kansas and likely to remain so, but the fight continues in other states. Kansans have shown these fights can be won with stinging effects to anti-abortion opponents. We support all those who stand with women to protect their inalienable rights and call on organizations in other states to get the issue in front of their voters through initiatives and referendums to repeal existing laws or enact new laws guaranteeing a woman's right to make decisions about her own body and health. We urge advocates to seek allies in social groups, political groups, and religious organizations who do not hold that life begins at conception. The key to protecting abortion rights is letting the voters decide by taking it out of the hands of radical legislators. However, this can take place in your state should be your goal.

Best regards,



President, NFDW

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