

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now - Tim Walz on overturning Roe 01G6BPK6RSGRWP8KR0SEDRBKRK

CATHY WURZER: This is *MinnesotaNow* on NPR News. I'm Cathy Wurzer. We're in the midst of live coverage in the hours since the US Supreme Court handed down an expected ruling that overturns federal abortion protections. We're looking at today's ruling from a Minnesota perspective.

Among lawmakers weighing in so far, Democratic US Senator Tina Smith issued a statement saying, quote, "This is a terrible day for America. This activist Supreme Court and the Republican senators and President who put them there have gutted that right because they think they know better than American women whose lives and stories they will never know."

Minnesota GOP Congressman Pete Stauber from the 8th District says, quoting now, "Today's historic ruling will save countless innocent lives. This ruling is a win for the sanctity of life. Additionally, this decision also returns decision making power back to elected officials in states as intended."

And you can expect to hear a lot more about abortion in the Minnesota governor's race this fall. On the line right now is DFL Governor Tim Walz. Thanks for joining us.

TIM WALZ: Good afternoon, Cathy.

CATHY WURZER: Abortion remains legal in Minnesota we know that with some exceptions to our West, North, and South Dakota have trigger laws that automatically outlaw abortion. And so Minnesota providers are expecting this surge in patients. And I'm curious, what can the state do if abortion facilities are overwhelmed by people coming from other states for services?

TIM WALZ: First and foremost, Cathy, is I think people across the country certainly here in Minnesota were shocked and angered by this decision. It is certainly going to hurt women in a profound way. And as you heard your previous guest mentioned, it's going to be up to the states.

And you're right, these trigger laws went into effect that now make life very difficult for women in our surrounding states. As long as we're governor in Minnesota, we're going to continue to assist facilities to make sure that we have access to reproductive rights health care and abortion. We can make sure that we're listening to them because I think that's exactly right. This is going to do nothing to reduce abortions. The very people who won't fund our school programs won't fund other things.

We understand that that's the real way that we get at unplanned pregnancies but allowing women that fundamental right to make the decision. So the state of Minnesota stands ready. We're prepared. We have great partners in this state. And we want to continue to make sure that very fundamental and most personal of all choices that women have is maintained.

CATHY WURZER: Republicans governor think they can make big gains this fall in the state, House, and Senate. Do you expect the chipping away of abortion rights in the state even though it's protected in the state Constitution?

TIM WALZ: I don't expect it. It will absolutely happen. They've said so. My opponent has said that abortion will become illegal in all circumstances, including rape and incest. I expect them to do exactly what they said they're going to do.

And just to be clear, I think again your previous guest professor was right about Minnesota constitutional law. But governors appoint Supreme Court judges here in Minnesota, and that right now is the firewall. The governor is the firewall between this horrific decision.

And again, it's not speculation because Justice Thomas was very clear about this. Next it will be access to contraceptives that will be followed by the choice of who you marry and they will continue to chip away at these rights. So yes, they have made it absolutely clear that it is a day one decision. And if anything should motivate people to protect these most fundamental privacy and personal decisions, it is going to be this November.

CATHY

WURZER:

You mentioned your opponent, that would be Republican Scott Jensen, who was out with a statement this morning saying, among other things that you support up to the moment birth abortions. I'll let you comment on that.

TIM WALZ:

Well, a specious relationship with the truth from my opponent from COVID to elections is one thing. Just to be very clear, I respect the right of women to work with their health care providers for the best interest of them, their health, and what they need to do. Twisting away from the very clear fact that Scott Jensen will make abortion illegal in Minnesota in all circumstances through his own words it's an outrageous position. It is grossly out of step with where Minnesotans are at. And it is hugely dangerous to the health of women across this state.

So we support women. We support our health care providers who know what needs to be done. We support where the Supreme Court was for 50 years. Minnesota has one of the lowest teen birth rates in the country.

Abortions are at a historic low because we take in holistic approaches to women's reproductive health care because we allow them and their providers to do it. So this does nothing to reduce any of those things. This is just a backwards looking dangerous position.

CATHY

WURZER:

Does the ruling change the complexion of this election? Will your messaging change, if at all?

TIM WALZ:

Well, it's been mine all along. The choice here is a radical choice, again, election denial, COVID denial, firearms in every hand, in every place, unregulated in any way, and now the idea that women have less freedoms than guns, if you will. Yes this will change the complexity of that because Minnesotans know we're an island of sanity and an island of decency in a pretty tough place, especially for women.

So I do believe that this ruling, which many of us feared but now the reality is upon it is only the first step in this march towards just this extreme ideology, a theological Supreme Court that is representing a minority of where Americans are at and certainly a minority of Minnesota voters. So yes, they will now get to spend the next four months answering for these radical policies. And this is not a theoretical move now, it is real. Abortions are now illegal in our surrounding states because of trigger laws.

Next steps they're talking about making it illegal for women to travel to states like Minnesota. So I guess if you're a woman in South Dakota and you want to come to Minnesota to shop, to visit a relative or whatever, I guess pregnancy test. I'm not sure. They need to answer these questions. And over the next four months I will assure Minnesotans that they will answer them because this is the firewall.

CATHY

WURZER:

For decades though, as you know, governor, every January there's been the March for Life to mark Rose anniversary. Those who are anti-abortion have worked very hard to elect anti-abortion lawmakers. They've kept the pressure up on to pass state restrictions. There's been a lot of work done. And I'm wondering why haven't Democrats done a better job of protecting a federal right to abortion?

TIM WALZ: Because we respect laws. We expected that folks like Justice Gorsuch would keep their word and Kavanaugh as they perjured themselves in front of a Senate committee hearing when asked about what they would do on this. We respect the rule of law.

And I think as it was a constitutionally-protected right, we expected people to follow that. And this totally arbitrary decision made by six conservative justices that were put in is it. But I can tell you what, they have awoken the sleeping giant. There is the majority of Americans stand with women's rights, they stand with the right to privacy, they stand with the idea that your own health care decisions should be there.

There will be a backlash. There will be a backlash, and it will be good people standing up to say this doesn't accomplish what you think it's going to accomplish. It simply criminalizes women for making health care decisions.

CATHY WURZER: I know you've been active with other states governors to codify into federal law the right to an abortion. How has that work going at the national level?

TIM WALZ: Yeah. We'll need to have that majority that's there. We know that now I think you're going to see people. It's time to take a stand on where you stand-- do you stand with women? Do you stand with the right to privacy?

Do you stand making sure that women are protected to be able to make these decisions? And so we'll continue to push that. I think right now I'm focused on this. The true firewall for this is Minnesota becoming Texas, Florida, South Dakota is in this governor's race. And that's why I will put all of my effort into making sure that we get the message out and that Minnesotans know what's at stake.

CATHY WURZER: All right. Governor, thank you for your time.

TIM WALZ: Thank you, Cathy. Goodbye.

CATHY WURZER: I've been talking to Governor Tim Walz here on *Minnesota Now*.