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Extremes Lose Out in Abortion Debate States' Actions... Public Reactions Trump Re-election Prospects Upside Down For Immediate Release

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

Americans with the most extreme positions on abortion, although defining the public debate, are a small minority in the United States. Fewer than one in five Americans (18%) think abortion should be available to a woman any time she wants one during her pregnancy, and 9% argue abortion should never be permitted under any circumstance.

The views of most Americans, however, are much more nuanced. More than six in ten Americans (61%) think significant restrictions should be placed on abortion. That is, they contend abortion should be permitted only during the first three months of pregnancy (23%), in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the woman (29%), or only to save the life of the woman (9%). 11% agree with the status quo, that abortion should be permitted during the first six months of pregnancy.

“Both sides in recent months have taken actions which overstep public opinion,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist Institute for Public Opinion. “In both instances, the reaction to their efforts has been that public opinion has moved in the opposite direction than these advocates intended.”

The passage of New York’s Reproductive Health Act in late January heightened the abortion debate. When the Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll measured Americans’ opinions on abortion in February, the proportion of Americans who reported abortion should never be permitted under any circumstance (17%) was nearly double its current proportion. 13%, at that time, said abortion should be allowed at any time during a woman’s pregnancy. 63% thought abortion should be allowed during the first three months of pregnancy, in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the woman, or only to save the life of the woman. Eight percent reported abortion

should be allowed during the first six months of pregnancy.

Since that time, there have been numerous initiatives by state legislatures – Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri – to restrict access. As a result, Americans' views more closely reflect what they were prior to the passage of the New York State law. Among those who hold the most absolute views on the issue, a Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll conducted in early January showed 15% of Americans asserted abortion should be available to a woman any time during her pregnancy, and 10% said abortion should never be permitted under any circumstance.

The survey also asked people to identify as either pro-life or pro-choice. This question wording, using the labels of pro-life and pro-choice, was included in the survey because it has tracked the public debate on abortion over decades. It is sensitive to current events and public discussion even though it does not capture the nuanced positions many people have on the issue. It does drive home the point. In January, 55% of Americans considered themselves pro-choice and 38% identified as pro-life. A gap that had widened after the Kavanaugh hearings. After the debate surrounding the New York law in February, the results changed to 47% pro-choice and 47% pro-life. Currently, after a month of restrictive state efforts particularly in Alabama which criminalizes the procedure for doctors, 57% identify as pro-choice and 35% as pro-life.

The proportion of Americans who currently identify as pro-choice is at its highest point since December 2012 when the same proportion of Americans said they aligned with the pro-choice position.

The arguments over abortion have caused increased dissatisfaction with the nation's policies regarding the abortion issue. 63% of Americans say they are either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with abortion policy, including 37% who say they are very dissatisfied. 26% of Americans say they are very satisfied or satisfied with the current laws.

Of note, the proportion of Americans who are *very* dissatisfied is more than seven times greater than those who are *very* satisfied (5%). When compared with Gallup's historical trend data on this question, the proportion of Americans who cite a high level of dissatisfaction with abortion policies is at its highest point since Gallup began asking this question in 2001.

Interestingly, many Americans who identify as either pro-life (66%) or pro-choice (62%) say they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the nation's abortion policies.

Most Americans want the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* amended or upheld, not overturned. Only 13% of Americans, including just one in three who identify themselves as pro-life (34%), want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. 26% of Americans want to keep it but add more restrictions, 14% want to keep it but reduce some of the restrictions, and 21% want to expand *Roe v. Wade* to establish the right to have an abortion under any circumstance. Only 16%,

including 21% of pro-choice Americans, want to uphold *Roe v. Wade* in its current form.

In light of recent state efforts, six in ten Americans (60%), including nearly one in five residents who describe themselves as pro-life (18%) and three in ten Republicans (30%), say they are more likely to support laws which decriminalize abortion and make abortion laws less strict. 30% of Americans are more likely to support laws which criminalize abortion and make the laws more strict. This includes 7% who identify as pro-choice and 14% of Democrats. One in ten adults (10%) are unsure.

Changes to abortion laws in several states are pending. Americans are more likely to support laws which permit abortion at any time during pregnancy if it is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman (86%), require women to wait 24 hours between meeting with a health care professional and undergoing the abortion procedure (65%), require doctors who perform abortions to have hospital admitting privileges (64%), or allow abortion at any time during pregnancy in cases of rape or incest (63%).

Americans are also likely to support laws which require insurance companies to cover abortion procedures (53%), allow abortions at any time during pregnancy if there is no viability outside the womb (53%), or require women to be shown an ultrasound image at least 24 hours before an abortion procedure (52%).

Americans are less likely to support laws which allow pharmacists and health providers to opt out of providing medicine or surgical procedures that result in abortion (42%), allow abortions but only up to the time there is viability outside the womb (37%), allow abortions but only up to the time cardiac activity is detected (33%), or make it a crime requiring fines and/or prison time for doctors who perform abortions (24%).

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Tables

Present % reporting "support"	The following are changes to abortion laws pending in several states around the country. Please tell me if you support or oppose each of the following:		
	National Adults	Pro-life	Pro-choice
A law that allows abortion at any time during pregnancy if it is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman	86%	73%	94%
A law that requires women to wait 24 hours between meeting with a health care professional and the abortion procedure	65%	81%	55%
A law that requires doctors who perform abortions to have hospital admitting privileges	64%	59%	68%
A law that allows abortion at any time during pregnancy in cases of rape or incest	63%	32%	82%
A law that requires insurance companies to cover abortion procedures	53%	20%	74%
A law that allows abortion at any time during pregnancy if there is no viability outside the womb	53%	32%	68%
A law that requires women to be shown an ultrasound image at least 24 hours before an abortion procedure	52%	80%	33%
A law that allows pharmacists and health providers to opt out of providing medicine or surgical procedures that result in abortion	42%	66%	27%
A law that allows abortions, but only up to the time there is viability outside the womb at about 24 weeks	37%	18%	50%
A law that allows abortions, but only up to the time cardiac activity is detected about 6 to 8 weeks into pregnancy	33%	36%	32%
A law that makes it a crime requiring fines and/or prison time for doctors who perform abortions	24%	55%	5%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

38% of Americans believe life begins at conception. 16% think life begins at birth. 14% say life begins when a fetus is viable outside the womb.

Among Americans who consider themselves pro-life, 72% say life begins at conception. Among those who identify as pro-choice, 26% say life begins at birth, and 21% think life begins when the fetus is viable and can live outside the womb. A notable 17% say life begins at conception.

		National Adults						
		Do you believe human life begins:						
		At conception	Within the first eight weeks of pregnancy	Within the first three months of pregnancy	Between three and six months	When a fetus is viable and can live outside the womb	At birth	Vol: Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
National Adults		38%	8%	8%	7%	14%	16%	8%
Position on	Pro-life	72%	8%	9%	1%	3%	3%	4%
Abortion	Pro-choice	17%	8%	8%	12%	21%	26%	9%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

Central to the abortion debate has been the language used to talk about it. When describing the first three months of pregnancy, Americans are more comfortable using the term “a fetus” (50%) than “an unborn child” (36%). Opinions divide based on Americans’ position on the abortion issue. 63% of pro-life Americans prefer the term “an unborn child” while 68% of pro-choice Americans use the term “a fetus.” However, when asked the same question about the last three months of pregnancy, 72% of Americans, including 84% of those who are pro-life and 66% who say they are pro-choice, are more comfortable using the term “an unborn child” rather than “a fetus” (19%).

When referring to an abortion during the last three months of pregnancy, 51% of Americans are more comfortable referring to it as a “late term abortion” while 25% are more comfortable referring to it as a “third trimester abortion.” A majority of pro-life Americans (54%) and a plurality of pro-choice residents (48%) prefer to use “late-term abortion.” Notable proportions are unsure.

“Heartbeat laws” is the characterization a plurality of Americans (46%) are more comfortable using when referring to laws which restrict abortions up until the detection of cardiac activity. This includes 66% of pro-life residents. 36% of Americans are more comfortable saying “laws restricting abortion within two months,” including the plurality (46%) of pro-choice Americans. 18% of Americans overall are unsure.

Abortion is likely to factor into the 2020 presidential campaign. More than eight in ten residents (83%), up from 71% in a December 2017 Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll, say it is a major (47%) or minor factor (36%) when deciding their vote for President. 15% think it is not a factor. Pro-life Americans (54%) are more likely than pro-choice Americans (45%) to consider abortion to be a major factor in deciding their vote.

Abortion also ranks among other important factors deciding most Americans’ votes. 16% of Americans consider health care to be their top issue, and the same proportion (16%) cite immigration. Personal financial well-being is mentioned by 14%. America’s role in the world and abortion each receives 12%. Climate change is mentioned by 10% followed by guns with 7%.

Democrats (24%) consider health care to be their top issue while Republicans (29%) say immigration is the most important factor in deciding their vote.

VTISS2020. NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Tables May 31st through June 4th, 2019

		National Adults									
		Which one of the following issues will be the most important factor in deciding your vote for president in 2020?									
		Health care	Immigration	Personal financial well-being	America's role in the world	Abortion	Climate change	Guns	Vol. All equally	Vol. Something else	Vol. Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	
National Adults		16%	16%	14%	12%	12%	10%	7%	5%	4%	4%
Party Identification	Democrat	24%	7%	11%	17%	8%	14%	8%	6%	3%	1%
	Republican	9%	29%	15%	11%	16%	2%	8%	4%	3%	4%
	Independent	16%	13%	14%	13%	12%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults

The proportion of pro-life Americans (17%) who cite abortion as the most important factor in deciding their vote is more than twice the proportion of pro-choice Americans (8%) with this view.

But, a majority of Americans (53%) say they definitely would not vote for a candidate who would appoint judges to the Supreme Court who would overturn Roe v. Wade. Only 19% would definitely vote for such a candidate, and 16% would support such a candidate but would do so with reservations.

A plurality of Americans (47%) think the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with the issue of abortion rather than the Republican Party (34%). Not surprisingly, opinions fall along party lines. Among independents, 43% say the Democrats would better handle the issue while 32% report Republicans would better deal with abortion.

When it comes to the potential re-election of President Donald Trump, 51% of voters nationally, including 55% of independents, say they definitely plan to vote against President Donald Trump. 36% report they definitely plan to vote for him. In the May 2019 NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll, 54% of voters said they planned to vote against Trump while 33% reported they planned to support him in 2020.

President Trump's Democratic challenger is still very much unknown. Most Democrats and Democratic leaning independents (84%) have not yet made up their mind about the Democratic candidate they will support for president. Only 14% have decided on for whom they will vote in the Democratic primary.

Democrats and Democratic leaning independents divide about whether it is better to have a Democratic nominee who shares their positions on most issues (47%) or has the best chance of beating Trump (46%).

What should Congress do with the Mueller report? Americans are moving away from investigations and toward impeachment. 25% of Americans, down from 33%, believe Congress

should continue the investigation into potential wrongdoing. 22%, up from 16% in May, think Congress should start impeachment hearings. 39%, a slight decrease from 42%, say Congress should take no further action, and 5% support censure.

The proportion of independents who support impeachment (23%) has more than doubled from what it was in May (14%). Fewer, 27% down from 38%, favor additional investigations.

President Trump's job approval rating among Americans stands at 41%, identical to the 41% score he received in May. The president's disapprove number is 49%, down slightly from 53%.

Among Americans who approve of the president's job performance, 28% strongly do so. Among those who disapprove, 36% strongly have this opinion.