



March 4, 2009

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Commentary**Long Arm of Law Reaching Up U.S. Women's Skirts**

Run Date: 03/01/06

By Kimberly Gadette
WeNews commentator*Kimberly Gadette says it's time to slap the groping male hand of the law back in its place as she considers last week's South Dakota abortion ban aimed straight for the Supreme Court.***Editor's Note:** The following is a commentary. The opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the views of Women's eNews.

(WOMENSENEWS)--The latest miscarriage of justice comes from the lawmakers of South Dakota.

Last week, they passed a bill that bans all abortions except those in which the mother's life is in mortal danger. All that's left is one pregnant pause before Governor Mike Rounds--who has expressed his support for the bill--gives full-blown birth to the bill by signing it into law.

Under the shield of the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing a citizen's right to privacy, I had the 1973 court ruling of Roe v. Wade to protect me, allowing me to decide whether or not to continue a pregnancy.

But given the current climate in Washington, accompanied by the maelstrom of this new South Dakota law slated to take effect July 1, I hear a ticking clock. No longer biological, this particular clock is wired to a shiny new bomb.

If one possessed a better view than the South Dakotan Walleye (the official state fish), one could have seen this coming. Between Medicaid programs that refuse payment for abortions, various state laws requiring parental notification, self-righteous pharmacists who refuse to fill "day-after" pills and debates over inconclusive evidence as to whether the fetus feels pain, abortion rights are eroding fast and furiously.

If signed into law, doctors in South Dakota would face up to five years in prison for performing an abortion unless it was absolutely necessary to save the woman's life.

Even more appalling, per Krista Heeren-Graber of the South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault, "If a woman who is raped becomes pregnant, the rapist would have the same rights to the child as the mother." Wow--family court as we've never seen it before.

Abortions in Back Alley Near You

If Roe v. Wade is overturned--and it's pretty clear that proponents of the South Dakota bill have designed it as a missile aimed straight at the Supreme Court--medical abominations are heading to women in a U.S. back alley right near you.

When one man puts an uninvited hand up a woman's skirt, it might be considered harassment, molestation, assault, perhaps even rape.

But when one U.S. government puts an uninvited hand up all women's skirts, these days it's considered business as usual.

Whether it's Sam Alito trying to get the nod from the Senate Judiciary Committee, or a candidate vying to win an election to represent a tiny constituency somewhere in this country, the One Big Question, repeated until we're blue in the ovaries, is "What are your views on abortion rights?"

Abortion, abortion, abortion.

Like prospective home buyers during a Sunday open house, it seems everyone's entitled to barge on into women's private parts and take a good, long look around. It's "a womb with a view." However, the view is theirs, not mine. My property, yet their view.

Open to Public View

If this were terra firma, I'd be able to call on the Fourth Amendment to legally defend my property rights. But since this is terra "femina" I'm expected to simply lie there, gracious hostess to the last, while all manner of judges, legislators and doctors probe at will. Gracious me, there's so much traffic going on, I'm surprised they haven't put up a stoplight.

Where's the legislation that concerns itself with men's reproductive anatomy? Perhaps I'm being walleeyed, but I can't find a thing.

The big issue is, well, "issue." It's about who issues the babies into the world (that would be women), but who controls that process (with the executive, legislative and judicial branches currently dominated by males, that would be men).

When we look to treatments of the female anatomy in other countries, we gasp with shock at descriptions of female genital mutilation.

"In some cultures, girls will be told to sit beforehand in cold water, to numb the area and reduce the likelihood of bleeding. The girl is immobilized, held, usually by older women, with her legs open. Mutilation may be carried out using broken glass, a tin lid, scissors, a razor blade or some other cutting instrument." That description is brought to you from the Amnesty International Web site.

It's cruel. It's grotesque.

But where is the audible gasping over what would happen to women right here in the land of the free if abortion rights are lost? Mutilation exacts the same toll, whether in a developing country or in New York, New York.

Primitive Gender Politics

I know that many men are just as horrified by the attack on choice as I am. But given the current domination of our political offices by men who oppose choice, it's hard not to see a primitive form of gender politics--even hatred--at work.

I took my concern to many female friends, and their reactions boiled down to one word: "control." At this late date, there is still the overarching need for the male to control the female, even if it means laying hands on her most private of possessions.

Why should I be surprised? Women only achieved the right to vote 86 years ago. Before the middle of the 19th century, the property rights of a U.S. woman went to her husband upon her marriage. It wasn't until the years between 1839 and 1895 that this tradition was gradually reversed by a series of Women's Property Acts passed in each state. Yet right of separate ownership of women's most "real" of individual real estate is now under severe scrutiny once again.

We're advancing so far, we're coming full circle. I can't wait to see the results when we attempt to reinvent fire.

When I was young, when both Roe v. Wade and I were in early bloom, there were nights of passionate wrestling with my boyfriend in his VW bug. Sixteen years old and as excited as he was, I knew myself, and knew I wasn't ready. While his hands kept groping me, mine kept slapping them away. When I was finally ready--and when it was entirely my choice--I stopped slapping.

What I'd give to be able to slap those government hands away today.

To the boys who currently dominate Washington, here's a message from one of the girls: It's my choice, not yours. You can legislate and adjudicate till you drop, but you can't control me. Control yourself. Seriously.

*Kimberly Gadette is a humor writer based in Portland, Ore. Working on her second novel, her columns and articles entail a deep dismemberment of topics including politics, sex, pop culture, dating, male sports and dogs. Currently juggling seven columns, she's been published over 60 times in the last year in publications from the West Coast to the East, as well as internationally.*Women's eNews welcomes your comments. E-mail us at editors@womensenews.org.

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