

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to rise today to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision by the Supreme Court. This decision is the firewall that protects women's health and the turning point that moved women's health forward. On this 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we reaffirm the Constitutionally-protected right of every woman to safe and legal healthcare. Women are nurturers by nature, but when life places a woman in the most difficult circumstances, the choices she needs to make should be free from government interference.

Over the years I have been proud to stand with many of my colleagues as we have beaten back repeated attempts to chip away at women's rights as set forth in Roe v. Wade. Over the last two years, we've seen the most extreme and repeated attempts to take away a woman's right to her health care. In the most recent Congress, we found ourselves defending a woman's right to access contraception. We opposed a bill that would have allowed women to die if the emergency room employee who came to her aid had a "conscientious objection" to performing an abortion that would save her life, without even being required to refer her elsewhere for help. We have insisted that politicians not place themselves in the operating room to judge the motives of a woman seeking a Constitutionally-protected medical procedure if they thought her decision may have been based on the gender or race of the fetus – a practice which has not been shown to be common in the United States by any stretch of the imagination.

Obviously our work is not finished. Just last year, 43 laws were passed in 19 states to restrict women's access to health care. But just as clearly, the American people have spoken strongly about their faith in women to make the right decisions for themselves and their family. As we mark the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, I am heartened by those who continue the progress begun so many years ago, and I look forward to the future.