

TUESDAY TOPICS JULY 5, 2022

Summary

President Carole Jordan opened the zoom meeting. Carole introduced our speaker, activist Dr. Sharon Sullivan, professor of Theatre and Women's and Gender Studies at Washburn University.

Dr. Sullivan spoke about the Value Them Both Amendment, constitutional amendment HCR 5003. This amendment is on the August 2 ballot. She said the language is confusing and she will try to clarify what the amendment means. Dr. Sullivan proceeded to explain the amendment in great detail.

Value Them Both (HCR 5003) declares abortions are NOT a protected constitutional right in Kansas. It allows the Kansas legislature to create laws and define medical terms related to abortion. There is no guarantee there will be exceptions or limitations.

Dr. Sullivan showed the text of the amendment. The amendment doesn't ban abortions but says people reserve the right to ban abortions through elected legislators.

If you vote NO the current law remains in place. Vote NO means no change to the constitution. It doesn't change any of the current laws.

Kansas already heavily regulates abortions. The following restrictions are currently in place.

- State-developed counseling discouraging abortion is required and then patient must wait 24 hours before procedure is provided.
- Parent consent is required for minors to have an abortion.
- No Telemedicine for the medication abortion. You must be seen in person.
- Public funds can only be used in cases of life endangerment, rape or incest. "Since 2013, Medicaid has paid for four abortions in the state of Kansas." (source: AP News)
- Private insurance and ACA Health Exchange programs only pay for abortions in cases of life endangerment.
- Public employee insurance only covers abortions in cases of life endangerment.
- Ultrasound is legally required before an abortion procedure, but not medically necessary.
- At 20 weeks an abortion can only be performed in cases of the mother's health, rape or incest
- Can't use an abortion for sex selection

Concerning adoption as an alternative - white newborns are most wanted. One in six children in Kansas go hungry. What will we do when more unwanted children are born?

"Within 24 hours of ovulation, the egg is fertilized by sperm if you have had sex in the last few days without using contraception. **About 5 to 6 days after ovulation**, the fertilized egg burrows into the lining of the womb – this is called implantation. You're now pregnant." (National Health Service).

Implantation can be completed as early as eight days or as late as 18 days after fertilization, but usually takes about 14 days. Between one-third and one-half of all fertilized eggs never fully implanted. **A pregnancy is considered to be established only after implantation is complete.** (Guttmacher Institute).

Science/Medicine define pregnancy as occurring at implantation, not fertilization. Many Kansas legislators, openly disagree with these facts. They make laws based on their "belief" that pregnancy begins at the moment of fertilization.

Of great concern is the possibility the legislature could ban contraception if amendment passes. Some states are already attempting to ban specific forms of contraception (such as the “morning after” pill) by arguing they are abortions.

Additionally, the legislature refused to put the amendment on the November election ballot despite bi-partisan support. Choosing the August primary was a tactical move. Fewer people vote in the primary.

The legislative issue is one of power and control. Some people think there are religious reasons as well. Separation between church and state may be blurred. Dr. Sullivan said, “You don’t get to tell me how to live my life based on your religion.”

Someone asked whether we are the antithesis of China where people are limited in the number of children they can have, while we criminalize people for not wanting children. Absolutely agree.

Dr. Sullivan said other developed countries are doing a lot better on this issue than we are. They fund science-based sex education, provide free contraception, support parents who choose to give birth, and fund abortions. They have very low levels of abortion. Young people in those countries also tend to wait longer to have sex. It’s not a moral issue, it’s a public health one.

Dr. Sullivan believes whether to have an abortion should be between the woman, her doctor, God, and her family. There are a lot of medical risks to pregnancy and birth. The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world. How does that impact families?

According to Dr. Sullivan, many of her Washburn students are pro-choice. They don’t see it as a moral issue. Many question if they want children or how they could ever afford them.

Remember:

- All registered Kansas voters can vote on the amendment regardless of party affiliation.
- VOTE NO to keep the current constitutional right to an abortion.
- Vote YES to accept the amendment that gives the legislature control over abortion and defining medical terms.