



Planned Parenthood Health Systems, Inc.

## **62 Percent of West Virginia Voters Support Access to Abortion at 20 Weeks in Cases of Severe Fetal Abnormalities**

### **New Poll Shows West Virginians Strongly Oppose 20-Week Abortion Bans When They Understand Reality of the Issue**

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**CHARLESTON** — The first poll that reflects the attitude of West Virginia voters and the reality of abortion later in pregnancy was released today, showing that when West Virginia voters understand the real-world circumstances surrounding abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy, they overwhelmingly oppose laws that would ban the procedure at that stage.

**The margins in opposition to these bans are significant. Moreover, the survey shows that the overwhelming majority of voters across party lines say this is the wrong issue for our state legislators to be spending time on.**

When they are reminded that abortions are very rare at this stage in pregnancy and that fetal abnormalities are often involved in the instances, a solid 62 percent of registered voters in three key districts support access to abortion at 20 weeks. Abortion later in pregnancy is extremely rare (nearly 99 percent of abortions in the U.S. occur before 21 weeks), but when it does happen it's often in heartbreaking and tragic situations involving severe abnormalities.

Unlike other polls, this survey — of voters in Senate Districts 2, 7, and 17 — asked about the specific circumstances in which abortions should and should not be allowed after the 20th week of a woman's pregnancy. Once West Virginians understand the range of circumstances in which abortion would be made illegal under most 20-week abortion ban proposals — like the one (HB. 4588) approved by the House of Delegates last week— they oppose the bans overwhelmingly.

***“Abortion is a deeply personal, often complex decision for a woman to make in consultation with her doctor, her family, and her faith, and we cannot make that decision for her. We are not in her shoes,” said Melissa Reed, Vice President of Public Affairs, Planned Parenthood Health Systems. “While women should not have to justify their personal medical decisions, the reality is that abortion later in pregnancy is rare and often happens under heartbreaking and tragic circumstances. Unfortunately opponents of safe and legal abortion have tried to distort that reality, and it is important for us to get the truth out there.”***

The poll, conducted by Public Policy Polling over the weekend on behalf of Planned Parenthood Health Systems, showed that a strong majority of voters — up to 69%— say this is the wrong issue for their state legislators to be spending time on.

Doctors oppose these laws because they prevent them from giving their patients the best health care possible in an

individual situation. Medical organizations like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and Physicians for Reproductive Health have spoken out about the dangers of this legislation.

**Among the poll's key findings:**

- In District 2, Fifty percent (50%) of all voters say abortions should be legal after 20 weeks if a woman's doctor determines that the woman would suffer serious, long-lasting health problems if she carried the pregnancy to term.
- In District 7, Fifty-one percent (51%) of all voters say abortions should be legal after 20 weeks if a woman's doctor determines that the fetus is not yet viable and the woman and her family determine that her health and personal circumstances are such that she should not continue her pregnancy.
- In District 17, Sixty-one percent (61%) of all voters say abortions should be legal after 20 weeks if a pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

**The full polling memo is available upon request.**

***“Regardless of how one personally feels about abortion, we can all agree that it’s important for a woman to have medically accurate information about her pregnancy. 20 week abortion bans are often based on unproven assertions about fetal pain. Medical experts, including the highly respected and trusted American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, are in agreement that science does not support these claims. From a public health perspective, however, banning abortion after 20 weeks is dangerous because it could prevent doctors from providing the best care to their patients in an individual situation. Some fetal testing is not possible until after 20 weeks, and the results are not something that a woman can plan for, said Reed.”***

In a recent piece for the *Texas Observer*, [“Texas’ New Abortion Law is Driving Women to Extremes,”](#) writer Carolyn Jones chronicles the heartbreaking story of a Texas woman who needed to end a pregnancy due to a lethal fetal abnormality and was forced to travel out of state because of Texas’ recently enacted 20-week abortion ban.

**Texas Observer: Texas’ New Abortion Law is Driving Women to Extremes**

<http://www.texasobserver.org/texas-new-abortion-law-is-driving-women-to-extremes/>

*Planned Parenthood Health Systems, Inc. is a private, nonprofit family planning agency that respects and protects the rights of each man and woman to make informed reproductive decisions. Our mission is to provide accessible, high-quality health care and information to clients and to serve as advocate and educator to the community on responsible human sexuality. We have offices and health centers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.*

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