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A Woman's Right to Choose?

Dear Colleague,

This weekend, organizations will come to our nation's capital, arguing that a woman's "right to choose" is under attack. According to this rhetoric, the centerpiece of a woman's "choice" is the ability to abort her child if she so desires. However, thirty-one years after *Roe vs. Wade*, many women who have exercised this option are beginning to speak out. What they have to say may surprise you:

"The promised solution—really the only option presented to me—wasn't the end of my nightmare, but only the beginning. I was completely unprepared for the emotional fallout after the abortion. It was difficult for me to understand why a surgical procedure would cause such deep regret and a sense of loss."

"My mom told me that I either had to have an abortion or get out of her house. The amount of guilt I feel is tremendous. Everything reminds me of what I did. I am trying very hard to get through this. I just can't get over it."

"My boyfriend and my family insisted that there was no way out but to choose abortion. I chose to be verbally manipulated to carry out their point of view, rather than thinking through the choice. I was given no alternatives. In the weeks, months, and years following the abortion, I fell in and out of depression, which was only masked at times by bursts of desperate hyperactivity."

"I went against my instincts and had the abortion. I was left with no choice and my boyfriend was no help... No one told me that after you have an abortion you hear babies screaming in your sleep... You are angry for no reason and snap at the least bit of stress... No one warned me that I would suffer panic attacks... No one told me that this quick fix would cause a host of other emotional problems that I would be dealing with my whole life."

These women's stories have one common thread – the belief that they had no choice but to choose abortion and the unexpected emotional consequences that followed. They are not alone. A 2002 study of 173,000 low-income women in California showed that women who had abortions were 63 percent more likely to receive mental care within 90 days of an abortion compared to delivery. This study, published in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, confirms what these women have been saying all along: Abortion does have serious psychological effects on women.

I invite you to visit www.afterabortion.org and www.hopeafterabortion.com for more information on the women quoted above and other similar stories. Abortion as a last resort with painful consequences, because a woman "has no other choice," is not the symbol of reproductive freedom at its finest. Rather, it is a sign that we as a society must provide more practical support for women in crisis. Abortion is a choice no woman should ever feel compelled to make.

Sincerely,



W. Todd Akin
Member of Congress