

Fall of Roe met with rejoicing, dismay from faith groups

by [Bob Smietana](#)

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A celebration outside the Supreme Court on June 24. The Supreme Court has ended constitutional protections for abortion that had been in place for nearly 50 years. (AP Photo/Steve Helber)

After nearly 50 years, *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion nationwide, is no more.

In a 6-3 decision on June 24, the Supreme Court overruled both *Roe*, decided in 1973, and a 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reaffirmed the constitutional right to abortion. The ruling came in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which challenged a Mississippi law that imposed strict

restrictions on abortion.

“Abortion presents a profound moral question,” the Supreme Court ruled. “The Constitution does not prohibit the citizens of each State from regulating or prohibiting abortion. *Roe* and *Casey* arrogated that authority. We now overrule those decisions and return that authority to the people and their elected representatives.”

The *Dobbs* decision has been anticipated since May, when an early draft of the ruling was leaked to Politico. The actual decision to overturn the constitutional right to abortion was met with both rejoicing and dismay by faith leaders, who have been loud voices on either side of the abortion debate since before *Roe*.

Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, head of the US Conference of Catholic Bishop’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said that Catholics and other faith communities had worked and prayed for *Roe*’s reversal for years.

He said that the church needs to focus its efforts on a “beautiful vision of human life” and redouble its efforts to assist pregnant mothers who are facing difficult circumstances.

“We haven’t simply opposed abortion,” he said in an interview. “We have been working for the cause of life by providing services—medical services, pro-life pregnancy centers, educational services, charitable services, adoption services.”

The USCCB also called for more support for pregnant women and their children in the wake of the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.

“It is a time for healing wounds and repairing social divisions; it is a time for reasoned reflection and civil dialogue, and for coming together to build a society and economy that supports marriages and families, and where every woman has the support and resources she needs to bring her child into this world in love.”

Jamie Manson, president of Catholics for Choice, reacted to the decision with “gut-wrenching horror.”

“This ruling gives right-wing leaders unfettered license to codify fringe religious beliefs into civil law. It is a full-frontal assault on, and is utterly incompatible with, the bedrock American principles of religious freedom and the separation of church and state.”

Like many Americans, faith leaders remain divided on the issue of abortion.

While more than half of Americans (61 percent) say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, 74 percent of White evangelicals say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. Few Americans believe it should be outlawed completely, according to Pew Research.

“Today is a day of heartbreak, outrage and injustice,” said Jeanné Lewis, CEO of Faith in Public Life, in a statement. “We all have God-given dignity, and we are created to live in respectful relationship with one another. Access to abortion care honors these values; criminalizing people who access or provide abortion does not.”

Texas pastor Bart Barber, newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said that Southern Baptists rejoiced at the ruling, and they support laws that would ban abortion, “except in cases wherein the life of the mother is endangered by carrying the baby to term.”

Barber also said “expectant mothers facing difficult circumstances deserve the love and support of the church, the community, and society.”

The New York-based Jewish Council for Public Affairs condemned the *Dobbs* ruling, saying it does not represent “the will of the people, nor is it in the best interests of the country.” The group also said banning abortion is contrary to Jewish law and values.

“While we treat a fetus with great significance, it does not merit the status of a person until the moment of birth and then it has equal status with the person giving birth,” the JCPA said in a statement. “If the fetus endangers a person’s life physically or, according to at least some Jewish religious authorities, through mental anguish, Jewish law supports abortion of a fetus up until the moment of birth.”

The American Humanist Association said the decision will undermine the rights of religious minorities, including non-theists. The group also worries the decision will be used in the future to undermine other Supreme Court decisions.

“The reasoning used will further provide a pathway to overturn decisions in important civil rights cases like *Obergefell v. Hodges* (which prohibits laws banning same-sex marriage) and *Loving v. Virginia* (which prohibits laws banning interracial marriage) among others, the group said in a statement.

On social media, Amani al-Khatahtbeh, founder of Muslimgirl.com, called the decision a violation of her religious freedom.

“As a Muslim woman with a God-given right to abortion, today’s Supreme Court decision is another horrific violation of my religious freedom in America,” she tweeted.

This is a breaking story and will be updated.—Religion News Service. Jack Jenkins and Claire Giangravé contributed to this report.