



**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER**

Justice for Her. Justice for All.

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Abortion Values Messaging Guide¹

Values-based messages are a powerful tool for culture, narrative, and policy change. Facts—no matter how true they are—are often discarded if they don't match the listener's framing, limiting the impact of purely facts-based messaging. Values-based messages allow for deeper connections with the listener, turn down the heat of emotionally charged discussions, and help us connect the dots between the issues and communities we care about.

In the face of stigmatizing narratives and attacks, it is essential to affirm our positive vision and values about abortion. We need to let people know what we are for, rather than simply what we are against, in order to make progress. We can do this by rooting our message on abortion in positive, shared values.

State lawmakers and advocates can use values-based messaging on abortion to connect with their constituents, shift the narrative, and strengthen support for abortion access in their communities.

The Problem

When speaking about abortion, start by framing the problem around threats to core values. This will set the stage and focus the conversation on what's at stake.

- Our rights are under attack in every aspect of life. Abortion bans and restrictions take the power away from people to make decisions about their own bodies.
- Abortion bans and restrictions take away the freedom every person should have to make decisions about their own bodies, lives, and futures.
- Pregnant women's/people's¹ health and lives are in danger when abortion is not accessible or available.
- Abortion bans restrict life-saving care for women/people experiencing pregnancy complications.
- New state restrictions and bans on abortion are expanding government's power and control over women.
- Different states have different laws, so the ability to get an abortion completely depends on where you live and how much money you have.

¹ We tested these problem statements using both gendered and gender -neutral language and found no major differences in reactions to the statement. We encourage using gender -neutral language whenever possible to be inclusive of all people who have abortions.

- Those who already face unequal barriers to care, especially young people, LGBTQIA+ people, and Black and Brown people, suffer the most from abortion bans and restrictions.
- Women/we cannot be truly equal if they/we do not have control over their/our own bodies and reproductive healthcare, including decisions about whether to have an abortion.

Abortion Storytelling

Sharing stories of real harm is a powerful way to amplify urgency and highlight the real-world impact of abortion bans and restrictions. These stories capture attention, even among audiences who are less consistently engaged with the news, and serve as an effective entry point for values-based messaging. You can share your own story or, with permission, the stories of your constituents and community members.² The stories that most amplify urgency and impact include:

- Stories about patients whose health or lives were harmed because of abortion bans
- Stories about patients being forced to continue a pregnancy
- Stories about doctors being investigated or charged with crimes for trying to provide abortion care

Compassion and Respect

Values of compassion and respect provide a common bridge to reach various groups of people who may have different views on abortion³ and appeal to a broad range of audiences. An example of this kind of message is, “My job is to respect the people I represent and their freedom to make the decisions about pregnancy and abortion that are best for their own lives.”

An effective communications approach is grounded in more than just content. Persuadable voters, i.e. those who are personally against abortion, but don’t believe government should prevent someone from making that decision for themselves, have specific communications needs. This group is particularly frustrated with the toxic rhetoric surrounding abortion and wants leaders who can express their stance without attacking those with opposing views.

To engage this group, leaders can lead with compassion and center the experiences and voices of their constituents. Leaders can also avoid degrading people who have different points of view, using hyperbole, or relaying misinformation.

Value Based-Messages That Work

The following messages are guideposts, rather than “talking points.” Using values-based messaging starts with identifying your own approach to the issue so that you can speak authentically and proactively from your own values.

Compassion and Dignity

- Let’s treat everyone with dignity and respect, even if we don’t agree with someone’s decisions. We don’t know everyone’s circumstances, and every pregnancy is unique.
- It’s better when we lead with compassion and let each person, not politicians, decide whether to have an abortion.
- It is not my place to judge or punish someone for having an abortion.

² To learn more about how to compassionately support and engage in abortion storytelling, visit [wetestify.org](https://www.wetestify.org).

³ For example, NWLC’s 2025 poll conducted by Hart Research, found that compassion and respect values resonated across both base and persuadable voters. Base voters agreed with the statement, “I personally support the right to abortion and believe it should be legal and available.” Persuadable voters agreed with the statement, “I am personally against abortion, but I do not believe the government should prevent someone from making that decision for themselves.”

While faith is not a value per se, talking about your values from a faith perspective can be powerful if it is authentic to you and your beliefs and commitments. This can be particularly powerful if you're speaking to individuals that are personally against abortion, but don't believe the government should prevent someone from making that decision for themselves. Here's one example of a way you can speak about abortion from a faith perspective:

Each person should be able to follow their own beliefs, faith, and conscience when they make decisions about pregnancy, abortion, and parenting. As a person of faith, I believe in treating people with compassion and dignity. We don't know what someone else is going through, and every pregnancy is different.

Safety

- Laws that limit or ban abortion make any pregnancy less safe.
- As we've seen in tragic cases across the country, when doctors are forced to deny care, it puts people's lives at risk.
- No one should face serious health complications or death because of laws that interfere with personal medical decisions. In healthcare, patients must always come first.

Autonomy/Agency

- Deciding whether or when to become a parent is one of the most personal decisions anyone can make.
- My job isn't to make those decisions for the people I represent. It is to respect them and their freedom to make the decisions about pregnancy and abortion that are best for their own lives.
- Every person should be able to make decisions about pregnancy, including abortion, without barriers, shame, or political interference.

Health and Well-Being

- Everyone should have the chance to live a safe and healthy life, and that includes being able to get an abortion and other reproductive healthcare. Abortion bans take that away and put people's health and well-being at serious risk.
- As a state lawmaker, my job is to put people's health and real-life needs first--not personal beliefs or politics.

Freedom

- We aren't truly free until everyone can make decisions about their own bodies, lives, and futures.
- Lawmakers should not have the power to deny abortion care or force someone to stay pregnant against their will.
- I believe our laws should protect people's freedoms, not take them away--including the freedom to control their own bodies.
- Denying abortion care and forcing someone to continue a pregnancy against their will takes away their freedom.

Equity

- Abortion care should be available, accessible, and affordable, without barriers based on who you are, how much money you have, or where you are from.

- Everyone should be able to make decisions about their own body, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they earn. But abortion bans hurt some more than others.
- Black and Indigenous women are more likely to die during pregnancy and more likely to live in states with bans-so if they are forced to carry a pregnancy, they take on higher health risks against their will.
- As a lawmaker, I want to end these injustices and ensure everyone can make the healthcare decisions that are best for them.

Rights

- Our basic rights are being taken away, including the right of people to make their own decisions about their bodies and what's best for them.
- Everyone should be able to get an abortion, no matter what state they live in.

Gender Equality

- Women cannot be truly equal if they don't have control over their own bodies and lives. Banning abortion is about controlling women and returning to a time when women could not make decisions about their bodies and futures.

Control

- Abortion bans are about politicians trying to control people. People, not politicians, should have the power to make decisions about their lives, bodies, and futures.

ⁱ This guide is based on research and guidance developed by the National Women's Law Center and Hart Research in 2025, as well as prior messaging research and guidance developed by the National Women's Law Center alongside Keefe Singiser Partners and Conway Strategic in 2021.