



Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113, 141, 143 (1973)

Plaintiffs challenged a law that denied women access to abortions. On review, the Supreme Court held that abortion was within the scope of the personal liberty guaranteed by the Due Process Clause. This right was not absolute, but could be regulated by narrowly drawn legislation aimed at vindicating legitimate, compelling state interests in the mother's health and safety and the potentiality of human life.

In Deciding the Controversial Case, the Court Devoted Attention to the Position of the AMA

The position of the American Medical Association. The anti-abortion mood prevalent in this country in the late 19th century was shared by the medical profession. Indeed, the attitude of the profession may have played a significant role in the enactment of stringent criminal abortion legislation during that period.

An AMA Committee on Criminal Abortion was appointed in May 1857. It presented its report, 12 Trans. of the Am. Med. Assn. 73-78 (1859), to the Twelfth Annual Meeting. That report observed that the Committee had been appointed to investigate criminal abortion "with a view to its general suppression." It deplored abortion and its frequency and it listed three causes of "this general demoralization":

"The first of these causes is a wide-spread popular ignorance of the true character of the crime - a belief, even among mothers themselves, that the foetus is not alive till after the period of quickening.

"The second of the agents alluded to is the fact that the profession themselves are frequently supposed careless of foetal life

The providing of medical information by physicians to state legislatures in their consideration of legislation regarding therapeutic abortion was "to be considered consistent with the principles of ethics of the American Medical Association." This recommendation was adopted by the House of Delegates. Proceedings of the AMA House of Delegates 40-51 (June 1967).