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Shown: Anti-abortion and pro-abortion demonstrators hold signs in front of the Supreme Court. Credit: © Mark Peterson/CORBIS

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FRONTLINE[®]

The Last Abortion Clinic

WEB SITE FEATURES

- View the entire program again online in streamed video (Windows Media and Real Player);
- Read summaries of the major U.S. Supreme Court cases on abortion, from Roe v. Wade to Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood of New England -- a potentially significant case that will be argued this fall;
- Click on an interactive map to find out your state's laws on abortion restrictions and information on upcoming state legislative battles;

- Explore the shifting attitudes of younger women towards abortion;
- Read analysis of how the Roberts Supreme Court might rule on abortion-related cases; plus
- Explore the extended interviews from the program; statistics on abortion in America; a Q&A with producer Raney Aronson and more.

coming Nov. 08, 2005 at 9pm ([check local listings](#))

(60 minutes) Today, the headlines are filled with speculation about changes in the U.S. Supreme Court and what those changes might mean for abortion -- an issue that has divided the country for over 30 years. Heated rhetoric from both sides continues to be heard in courtrooms and on the campaign trail. But while attention is often focused on the arguments, there is another story playing out in local communities. Pro-life advocates have waged a successful campaign to reduce abortions in many places throughout the country. By using state laws to regulate and limit abortion and by creating their own clinics to offer alternatives to women, they have changed the facts on the ground. On Nov. 8, FRONTLINE investigates the steady decline in the number of physicians and clinics performing abortions and focuses on local political battles in states like Mississippi, where only a single clinic performs the controversial procedure. ([read the press release](#))

PRESS RELEASE

DOES ROE v. WADE STILL MATTER?

FRONTLINE Presents

THE LAST ABORTION CLINIC

Tuesday, November 8, 2005, at 9 P.M. ET on PBS

<http://www.pbs.org/frontline/clinic/>

This November, the Supreme Court will take up its first major abortion case in five years: *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood of Northern New England*. This case will come before a changed court. But for Betty Thompson, a former abortion clinic director in Jackson, Mississippi, the concern is less about *Ayotte* and more that *Roe v. Wade* is simply becoming irrelevant as states pass hundreds of abortion regulations across the United States. "[Pro-life groups] are going to chip away at *Roe v. Wade* until the law is on the books, but nobody will be able to access the service," she tells FRONTLINE. According to one abortion provider in the South, who prefers to remain anonymous: "The assault on abortion rights is very clever. It's very smart. And we are losing."

In the summer of 2005 -- more than 30 years after *Roe v. Wade* established that access to abortion services is a fundamental right -- a FRONTLINE documentary team spent two months traveling across the South, where states have been particularly active in passing restrictions on abortion. In interviews with abortion providers and their patients, staff at a pro-life pregnancy counseling center and key legal strategists on both sides of the national debate,

FRONTLINE producer Raney Aronson (*The Jesus Factor*) documents the success of the pro-life movement and the growing number of states restricting access to abortion.

In the last two years, Mississippi has passed legislation on fetal homicide prosecution, new clinic regulations, requirements to report abortion complications, rights of conscience, and a law that would prohibit the state's last abortion clinic from offering abortions beyond the first trimester. Americans United for Life (AUL), the nation's oldest national pro-life organization, refers to this as the "Mississippi Miracle." "We're sending a very clear message that we do want to protect the unborn," says Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck. "That's why we've passed the legislation that we have, and it's passed overwhelmingly. It's bipartisan support. It's Democrats and Republicans. ... It's the House of Representatives and the Senate. Mississippi is truly pro-life."

With an ever-increasing number of state abortion regulations and a steady decline in abortion providers, the procedure, while still legal, has become daunting and expensive in many states. In Mississippi, Medicaid offers support for women seeking to continue with an unintended pregnancy, but no state funds or facilities may be used for abortion services. In the last decade, all but one clinic providing pregnancy terminations in the state have closed. The last abortion clinic, in Jackson, is difficult to access for women outside the capital who do not own a car, who have limited funds for gas or who cannot easily take time off from work or child care responsibilities. "It's like even before *Roe v. Wade* for these poor women," says Pat White, a nurse-midwife who has been working in the Mississippi Delta for decades. "We are making decisions for them. These women have no option except to continue with the pregnancy, whether they can afford it, or whether or not it's wanted, or whether or not they can emotionally provide for the child."

But Americans United for Life considers Mississippi an example for the nation. In fact, the organization's motto is "Changing Law to Protect Human Life, State by State." "Mississippi has an impressive track record," AUL senior legal counsel Clarke Forsythe tells FRONTLINE. "Our goal is to see that other states pass the type of legislation that Mississippi has passed over the past decade, and we see a lot of legislative activity. Legislators and governors across the country in many different states are looking at the same type of common sense legislation that Mississippi has passed."

The Last Abortion Clinic is a FRONTLINE co-production with A Little Rain Productions, Inc.

The producer, director, and writer is Raney Aronson.

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FRONTLINE is closed-captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

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Promotional photography can be downloaded from the PBS pressroom.

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