

AN EXCERPT FROM:

THE

**ALTERNATIVE**

TO

**ABORTION**

WHY WE MUST BE  
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

**FRAMEWORK FIVE**

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN TOLD  
THAT MEN SHOULD HAVE NO SAY  
IN THE ABORTION DECISION

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# FRAMEWORK FIVE

## How to Respond When Told That Men Should Have No Say in the Abortion Decision

If you've been around the abortion debate for any period of time, you've probably heard someone say that men's opinions, thoughts, and actions about abortion don't matter. The position—typically held by pro-choice people—argues that since a man does not have a womb to carry an unborn child, he should have no moral, legal, or ethical say in what happens to an unborn child. They have framed abortion as a woman's issue through the “my body, my choice” mantra, and they just want men to stay out of it. Care Net hears this challenge to men so often we've coined it the “no womb, no say” perspective.

Some years ago, the pro-choice movement started an aggressive initiative encouraging men to support abortion rights. This effort challenged men to be “Bro-choice,” and even took pledges to show their support. In fact, in 2015 the Men4Choice initiative was started.<sup>1</sup> Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE), another major proponent of the Bro-choice movement, states on its website, “Pro-choice men can be a powerful force in helping move our policy agenda forward, which is exactly why URGE leads the way in recruiting and elevating their voices within this movement.”<sup>2</sup>

Most recently, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, convened a panel discussion that focused on the role men can play in championing more access to abortion rights. The panel was co-hosted by Men4Choice. Moreover, *The Wall Street Journal* recently printed a glowing story about recruitment efforts targeting men to support a woman's bodily autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Oddly, the publication was nowhere to be found

when Care Net hosted two first of their kind and well-attended Called and Missioned pro-life men's conferences.

After reading these perspectives, I was reminded of the old quip, "When I want your opinion, I will give it to you." It also reminded me of a pro-choice bumper sticker that says, "I don't want my reproductive rights decided by a bunch of gray-haired white guys." Of course, this bumper sticker misses the irony that abortion was made legal by just such a group—the Supreme Court in 1973. If old white guys can't get it right now, isn't it possible they got it wrong then? In any case, for Bro-choice advocates it's perfectly fine for men to engage in the abortion debate, as long as they come down on the right side.

That hypocrisy aside, let's take a closer look at the "no womb, no say" perspective and see if it holds up to scrutiny. First let's start with the obvious: men are one-half of the biological equation when it comes to creating a pregnancy, so to argue they have nothing of value to say about the fate of that pregnancy is a logical stretch.

Second, the principle underlying the "no womb, no say" view is that unless one is impacted by an issue in the most direct way, one should have no agency in making decisions about that issue. So, let's consider a few situations. Should a woman who is a stay-at-home mom and makes no income outside the home have a say on tax policy? After all, she doesn't directly pay taxes for an income. Should someone who does not own a gun have a say in our nation's gun laws? A non-gun owner is not going to be directly impacted if access to guns is limited.

When you consider the "no womb, no say" perspective in light of our nation's history, it's especially troubling. Consider the Civil War. The South was primarily an agrarian society structured around and dependent on slave labor. Indeed, a key aspect of the Southern states' rights argument was that since the North's society and economic system would not have been directly impacted by the abolition of slavery, the North should have no say. Indeed, "no slaves, no say," was the South's proverbial battle cry.

Consider the issue of voting rights in the United States. From our nation's founding, voting rights were limited to property-owning or tax-paying white males who made up about 6 percent of the population. So the notion was,

“no property, no say.”

Even when voting rights were extended to other men, women were still excluded. Why? Because many men believed women should not be directly involved in the economic and civil aspects of American society. Consequently, these men held a “womb, no say” perspective when it came to voting rights. The Women’s Suffrage Movement rightly changed that perspective, and with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, women were given the right to vote...by men. All these examples prove we have rightly rejected the principle that undergirds the “no womb, no say” perspective on abortion.

When considering what is best for our society, we don’t consider only the view of those directly impacted to the exclusion of all others. To do so would be an injustice, especially to those who are vulnerable. Rather, we give an equal say and even encourage the voices of those who are affected, even if it’s only indirectly.

Indeed, a stay-at-home mom is affected by tax policy, so she has an equal right and is encouraged to vote. Our nation’s gun laws affect the safety of the communities where the non-gun owners live and raise their children, so they must have an equal say in the enacted laws. The moral stain and injustice of slavery affected those in the North, so they had agency and an obligation to fight a bloody war to eliminate it. The laws passed in this nation affected women’s rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, so it was an injustice to deny them the right to vote.

In all these issues, our society determined it would be an injustice to deny certain people the right to have a say in issues that affect them, even if indirectly. Men are directly impacted by pregnancies they create. Several recent studies have confirmed the reality that abortion does affect men. One study found five different ways in which men were affected by abortion, such as expressing a need for counseling and experiencing ambivalent and painful emotions after abortion. When an unborn child is killed in the womb it deeply affects a man, especially if it is his child. So doesn’t it make sense for him to have a say too?