

BHEKISISA TRACKING EMBED CODE

<script async="true" src="https://syndicate.app/st.js" type="text/javascript"></script>

Headline: [WATCH] The personal is political: 3 ways US abortion politics could affect SA

Blurb

America's highest court – the Supreme Court – looks set to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling that legalised abortions in the United States. What sort of ripple effect will that have in SA? Legally, none. But there are other ways we could be affected.

Bullets:

- In South Africa, the Choice on Termination Act protects the rights of a person to have access to a safe abortion, as does the Constitution.
- The proposed reversal of *Roe v. Wade* won't have much of an effect on abortion laws in the country but it's hard to get an abortion in South Africa anyhow.
- The effect of a sea-change in American abortion politics will be felt more on a social, political and economic level rather than a legal one. Watch this short video to find out what legal and policy experts expect to happen.

Joan van Dyk & Yolanda Mdzeke

Lawmakers in the United States may overturn the right to an abortion in the country.

We know this because a document signed by five Supreme Court judges was leaked to the media.

The leak showed those legal experts want to scrap a previous ruling that made terminations legal across America.

What will this mean for South Africa?

Nothing about the country's laws will change.

Abortions in SA are governed by a law called the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act.

It has been in place since 1996. The right to an abortion is also written into South Africa's Constitution.

US government support to the health department should not be affected by abortion politics there.

But the move may still pose a political threat to people in South Africa who want to end a pregnancy.

Legal and policy experts imagine 3 ways this could happen

Scenario 1

Conservative political groups may see an opportunity to organise around anti-abortion topics to gain power.

Parties such as the African Christian Democratic Party have already tried to undermine abortion rights in parliament twice (in 2010 and 2017).

Both attempts have failed.

Scenario 2

The move adds grist to the anti-abortion mill in South Africa.

Right wing lobby groups based in the US already fund “pregnancy crisis centres” in SA that advise young people not to terminate. They also advocate against sex education that includes people’s right to reproductive choice.

Experts fear that donor dollars for pro-choice nonprofits may dry up and weaken civil society’s ability to hold the government accountable.

Scenario 3

Confusion about the global gag rule

The gag rule allows a US president to halt funding to organisations that provide abortions, whether this is done with US money or not.

This policy was repealed at the start of 2021 when Joe Biden was sworn into office, but many people in developing countries who get American funding didn’t know this had happened.

So, the harms of this policy were in place for far longer than was necessary.

Policy experts fear that people will think the fact that the US no longer supports abortion rights means that the gag rule is back when it isn’t.

This story was produced by the [Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism](#). Sign up for the [newsletter](#).