

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Shields.

STATEMENT OF KAREN SHIELDS

Ms. SHIELDS. Mr. Chairman, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Karen Shields, and I am going to be summarizing my statement. I ask that the written statement be made a part of the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the entire statement will go in the record.

Ms. SHIELDS. I am here representing the National Abortion Rights Action League, which is a political grassroots organization which represents and has a membership of almost 200,000 men and women in this country. I am NARAL's Board Chair.

As an Associate Justice, William Rehnquist has stated time and again his willingness to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. After 13 years of legal abortion, it is important for you to understand and try to imagine what women's lives will be like if William Rehnquist succeeds in overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

I want the magnitude of the decision you are making in deciding whether to confirm this man to be as clear to you as possible. It is only through personal experience that the real impact of illegal abortion in women's lives can be understood.

I have never before told publicly the story of my own illegal abortion. But mine is not an unusual story. It is a story shared by tens of thousands of women. Many of you have seen similar stories and letters from your constituents. And I would guarantee that every Senator who normally sits within this Chamber has received these letters.

In late 1970, I was 18 years old and I was just out of high school. I was a student in Tampa, Florida, and I was pregnant. Abortion was legal in New York, but I could not afford the trip.

After several unsuccessful tries at self-induced abortion, a friend of mine finally found a man with Mafia connections who could help me get an illegal abortion in Miami. It took every penny I had, plus the money many of my friends could scrape together, and by then I was four months pregnant.

This man took my friend and me to Miami. A woman there inserted a catheter and told me that I would abort in a few hours, but I did not. This man disappeared, and after 24 hours of waiting, I removed the catheter and my friend and I were left to hitchhike home. I was convinced at that point that I was pregnant and I was going to continue that pregnancy.

But a month later, 5 months into that pregnancy, I went into labor and I was rushed to the local hospital where I almost died as a result of that abortion.

In my vision of our country's future, no woman will be forced as I was to risk the dangers of self-induced abortion. No woman will be forced as I was into the hands of the Mafia because she is too poor or too young to afford a legal abortion or too young or too poor to travel to another State. No woman will have to choose as I did between an unwanted pregnancy and an illegal, unsafe abortion.

Some may question the propriety of examining a Justice's position on one particular issue. But 57 percent of the public believe that it is legitimate to reject a nominee who would overturn *Roe*. The American people understand that William Rehnquist's attitudes on abortion are important because abortion is an issue of far-reaching implication in women's lives. It is the right to choose abortion which guarantees the other rights that we have.

William Rehnquist's position on abortion illustrates his thinking on issues that affect every citizen of this country. If liberty does not include the right to make certain decisions in privacy, we will lose not only the right to abortion but also widely cherished rights to other decisions as well—decisions about marriage, family living, child rearing, what we read in our homes and our use of contraception.

The National Abortion Rights Action League urges you to vote against William Rehnquist's confirmation as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in order to preserve the health, the privacy, the life, and the liberty of American women.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

[Statement follows:]