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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2003

30th Anniversary of Roe v Wade Tuesday, January 21, 2003

Remarks of NARAL Pro-Choice America President Kate Michelman

Washington, DC— Thirty years ago today, untold thousands of women were living in silence and fear. I was one.

A few years before, I chose to have an abortion. In the depths of my heart, I knew that choice was right. And yet the strength of my own conviction could not obscure this fact: Through the collective expression of the law, society had condemned me.

Thirty years ago tomorrow, I was free.

I will never forget when I heard. The front page of the newspaper was filled with the news of **President** Johnson's death. But there, tucked into a corner, I saw the headline.

The Supreme Court of the United States had ruled a woman had a constitutional right to make her own reproductive choices.

Instantly I knew what it meant. If an institution so august—a constitution so infused with the spirit of freedom—believed I had a right to choose, then I—and untold other women—need no longer live in silence.

Justice Blackmun once wrote of the freedom to choose:

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"I fear for the future... The signs are evident and a chill wind blows."

Thirty years later that wind is blowing at gale force.

For the first time since *Roe v. Wade*, anti-choice politicians control the Presidency and both houses of Congress. The Supreme Court is a vote away from allowing them to dismantle the freedom to choose.

The New York Times characterizes the assaults on choice as part of a broader war on women. Anti-choice leaders recently said the goal of their movement was a return to pre-1973 **America**.

Roe v. Wade is hanging on by a one-vote majority — with an anti-choice **President** and Congress eager to install the one justice who could take our freedom away.

If *Roe* is overturned, fully half the states would swiftly ban or severely restrict abortion. If *Roe* is overturned, women will return to — and die in — the back alleys. If *Roe* is overturned, women will be forced to bear children against their will — with devastating implications for mother and child alike. If *Roe* is overturned, a woman's right to contraception could be the next right lost.

And so the moment is upon us —it is here, in this room —and so are those whose conviction and courage will determine the direction in which it turns.

We are going to need every **pro-choice** American and every **pro-choice** member of Congress. Indeed when **President** Bush sends a Supreme Court nominee to the Senate for confirmation, I fully expect **pro-choice** Senators to filibuster any candidate who does not uphold a women's constitutional right to choose.

When historians write the story of this moment, they will say every trend pointed toward the end of *Roe*. If we are to save our rights, we must deflect —we must change —history's course.

And yet I believe history is on our side, not theirs. Because in **America**, we do not lose freedoms. We gain them.

So tonight we meet for the first time with a new name and a renewed purpose. Tonight, we are **NARAL — Pro-Choice America**.

We are **Pro-Choice America** because that name reflects the fundamental question our movement asks —the question of choice —the question of: Who decides? Women or politicians?

We are **Pro-Choice America** because that name reflects the means by we will save a women's right to choose and turn the course of history.

Yet our task is larger than any one organization. It is to build a resurgent movement.

We begin this renewed journey with a mobilization on a scale unprecedented even in our movement's accomplished past.

From the grassroots to the airwaves, we will reach Americans with a simple message — I am **pro-choice America**.

We will save this right the same way we won it — one person at a time, one neighborhood at a time, one community at a time, one state at a time.

And we begin tonight. On each of your tables, there is this card — a commitment card — one that pledges you to enlist in this mobilization — by joining our choice action network, persuading five friends to join **NARAL** and hosting a choice celebration in your home.

Please, fill this card out and return it to us before you leave your table tonight.

And know that the instant you enlist, you become part of a historic moment.

America's history is woven from such moments — single points in time on which the full weight of a nation's future turned. They have occurred in many places and taken many forms, but all share a common theme: action.

Had Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott not braved scorn and skepticism at Seneca Falls, women might still be second-class citizens.

If Rosa Parks had quietly taken her seat at the back of the bus the cause of civil rights might never have caught fire.

Now, for freedom's cause, we are called upon to meet the same challenge these heroes did. Our daughters will remember this moment — for good or for ill — and they will ask:

Did we act? Did we accept history's course in passive silence — or did we have the courage to change it?

The task before us is daunting. But it can be done.

Yesterday our nation celebrated the birthday of a man who changed the course of history. When Martin Luther King Jr. came to this city to declare his dream in the famous march of 1963, he said: "We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind **America** of the fierce urgency of now."

Tonight we remind each other — and our country — of the fierce urgency of now.

We have stood at the brink before and prevailed. In 1992, at this event, **pro-choice** candidates for the Presidency joined us. At that time, *Roe* was a vote from extinction. An anti-choice **president** was an overwhelming favorite for re-election. And yet together, against all the odds, we saved the freedom to choose.

Tonight once more we are honored to be joined by six public servants who seek the nation's highest office and are committed to defending its highest ideals.

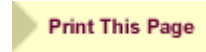
Will Governor Howard Dean, Senator John Edwards, Representative Dick Gephardt, Senator John Kerry, Senator Joe Lieberman and Reverend Al Sharpton please join me on stage?

Our freedom may be entrusted to one of these leaders. Please listen to

them carefully.

Contact:

Carlyn Foster at (202) 973-3032



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