

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS ®
the voice of women in the law™

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS REGARDING
SUPREME COURT OPINION IN *GONZALES v. CARHART*, DECIDED APRIL 18, 2007**

Our legal system is built on respect for precedent, as acknowledged by public officials and the Supreme Court itself. Yet, this week, by a 5-4 vote, the United States Supreme Court rejected its prior precedents and permitted intrusive government regulation of women's reproductive decisions. In *Gonzales v. Carhart*, No. 05-380 (April 18, 2007), the Court upheld a law which makes it a crime for doctors to use the "intact dilation and extraction" medical procedure that the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists believes is safe and sometimes necessary to protect a woman's health. This decision permits the government to substitute its judgment for the treating physician's in considering a full range of medically appropriate options for the patient. The National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) criticizes the decision as inconsistent with prior case law and urges the Congress to act to allow women and their doctors, rather than politicians, to make medical decisions for families.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was decided over 35 years ago, women have relied on Supreme Court jurisprudence protecting their right to make private and safe reproductive choices. The Court has consistently rejected state efforts to interfere with a woman's decision to have an abortion prior to viability, and it has insisted that regulation of post-viability abortions must include exceptions that protect the woman's health and life and leaves particular medical decisions to a patient and her doctor. *Carhart* represents a break with that established jurisprudence by upholding the politicized Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003.

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NAWL is the leading national voluntary organization devoted to the interests of women lawyers and women's rights. Founded over 100 years ago, NAWL has members in all 50 states and engages in a variety of programs and activities to advance its mission. More information is available at www.nawl.org.