



Next Major SCOTUS Abortion Case: *June Medical Services v. Russo*

On March 4, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear [*June Medical Services v. Russo*](#), a case that is being litigated by the Center for Reproductive Rights, involving a Louisiana law that would leave just one doctor to provide abortions for approximately one million women of reproductive age.¹ That means one doctor for the roughly 10,000 women who seek abortions every year in Louisiana.

What is *June Medical Services v. Russo*?

- *June Medical v. Russo* is one of the first abortion rights cases to come before the Supreme Court since the confirmation of Justices Gorsuch and Kavanaugh. The case involves a Louisiana law that is identical to a Texas law struck down just three years ago by the Supreme Court in [*Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*](#), a case that was also brought and won by the Center for Reproductive Rights.
- The Supreme Court recently announced the decision to hear the case in full, which means it has the opportunity to uphold the precedent set in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* and protect access to abortion.

What is Louisiana's Act 620?

- Act 620 prevents doctors from performing abortions unless they have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of where the abortion is performed.
- This admitting privileges law is a clinic shutdown law.
- An identical admitting privileges law in Texas was **declared unconstitutional** by the Supreme Court in 2016 in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* because it placed an **undue burden on the right to abortion access**.
- Before the Supreme Court struck down the admitting privileges law in Texas, **about half of the state's abortion clinics were forced to shut down**.
- Since 2011, **four abortion clinics in Louisiana have already closed. Only three clinics remain**.
- Act 620 would force two of the last three clinics to stop providing services, **pushing abortion access out of reach for most Louisianans**.

How would admitting privileges impact patient safety?

¹ NOTE: Prior to February 6, 2020, this case was known as *June Medical Services v. Gee*. The name of the defendant changed when Stephen Russo was appointed the Interim Louisiana Secretary of Health following the resignation of Secretary Rebekah Gee.

- Though Louisiana lawmakers claim admitting privileges would protect the health of patients, **the Supreme Court already found that Texas' nearly identical law would not improve health and safety.**
- Major medical organizations, including **ACOG and AMA, oppose admitting privileges regulations** because they have no medical benefit.
- The district [court](#) held a trial with live witnesses and found Louisiana's Act 620 would **not help even one patient get better treatment. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit agreed.**
- Abortions are already extremely safe. The rate of major complications requiring hospitalization in the first trimester is about 0.2 percent.
- Doctors who perform higher-risk procedures, like [vasectomies](#) and [colonoscopies](#), are not required to have admitting privileges.

What are the legal implications of *June Medical Services v. Russo*?

- The Supreme Court has the opportunity to uphold precedent and strike down the Louisiana law as unconstitutional.
- If the law goes into effect, it would decimate abortion access in Louisiana.

Case Timeline:

- June 12, 2014 – Act 620 is signed into law
- August 22, 2014 – Center for Reproductive Rights files lawsuit
- August 31, 2014 – Federal district court enters temporary restraining order barring enforcement of Act 620
- January 26, 2016 – Federal district court enters preliminary injunction after a six-day trial
- June 27, 2016 – SCOTUS decides *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* (WWH)
- April 26, 2017 – Federal district court issues a permanent injunction, striking down the law
- September 26, 2018 – 5th Circuit upholds the law as constitutional despite WWH, reversing lower court decision
- January 18, 2019 – 5th Circuit denies petition to have the full court rehear the case
- January 25, 2019 – the Center files a motion to put the law on hold while the case is appealed to SCOTUS. The 5th Circuit denies request 3 hours later. The same night, the Center files an emergency motion with SCOTUS to block the law from taking effect while the Center prepares a cert petition to SCOTUS. Law is scheduled to take effect on February 4, 2019
- February 1, 2019 – Justice Alito temporarily stays the law through February 7 to allow SCOTUS time for consideration of the Center's emergency motion
- February 7, 2019 – SCOTUS grants an emergency stay, temporarily blocking the law hours before it's scheduled to take effect in a 5-4 vote (Justice Kavanaugh writes dissenting opinion)
- April 17, 2019 – the Center files appeal (petition for certiorari) with SCOTUS
- October 4, 2019 – SCOTUS grants the petition for certiorari, agreeing to hear the case
- November 25, 2019 – the Center files its opening brief in the case
- December 2, 2019 – Amicus Briefs filed in support of June Medical Services
- December 26, 2019 – the State of Louisiana files its opening and response brief
- January 2, 2020 – Amicus Briefs filed in support of the State of Louisiana

- January 22, 2020 – the Center files its response brief and reply on the issue of standing
- February 18, 2020 – the State of Louisiana responds to the Center on standing
- March 4, 2020 - SCOTUS will hear oral arguments

If you would like to learn more about *June Medical Services v. Russo*, experts at the Center for Reproductive Rights are available for interviews. Please send press inquiries to crr@rubenstein.com.

About the Center for Reproductive Rights

Founded in 1992, the [Center for Reproductive Rights](#) is a global legal advocacy organization dedicated to advancing reproductive health and rights. The Center's groundbreaking court cases have expanded access to safe abortion, birth control and maternal healthcare in the U.S. and across the globe.

Experts Available for Interview

[Nancy Northup](#), President and CEO

[Julie Rikelman](#), Senior Litigation Director and attorney on the case

[T.J. Tu](#), Senior Counsel and lead attorney on the case