

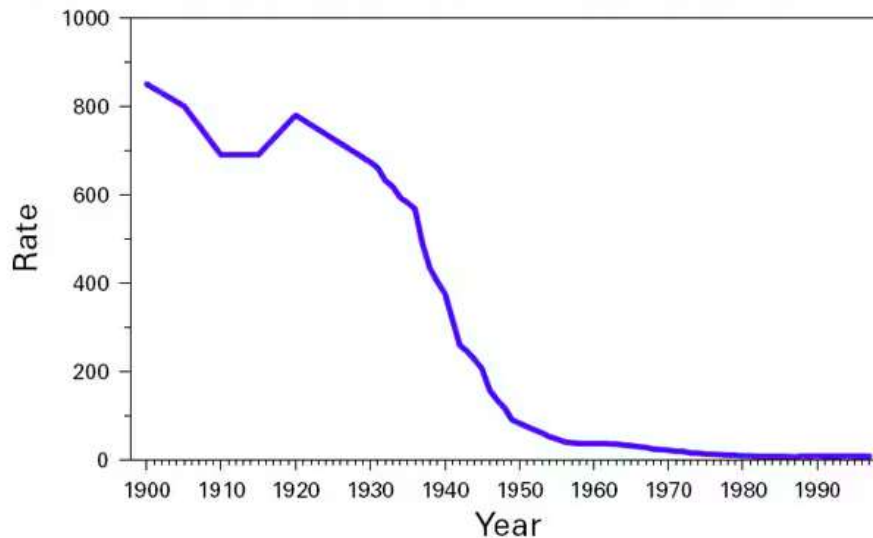
Julie Reiten
Minot, ND

I am writing in favor of HB 1478.

I want to explain why this bill is important to me without compromising anyone's privacy, living or dead. Suffice it to say that I know women who have nearly died of childbirth. In one case, the husband valued his wife and took action to prevent future pregnancies. In another, the husband disliked the only contraceptive measure available to the couple at the time in rural North Dakota and valued his pleasure more than the life of his wife. This story is not unique. Prior to contraception, death by childbirth was a far more common occurrence than it is today. So was death from health complications exacerbated by having too many children. I was doing some genealogical research recently and found a number of female ancestors who had a lot of children and died young. I think anyone else who does the same research into their own family will find the same thing. That kind of thing was common; pregnancy puts a woman's body under immense strain, and constant pregnancy can have very negative long-term health impacts. If you look at the dates, some of these women had a baby every year except maybe one or two when they might have had a miscarriage.

I would like to share a chart from the Center of Disease Control website which can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4838a2.htm>

FIGURE 2. Maternal mortality rate,* by year — United States, 1900–1997



* Per 100,000 live births.

While there were other factors (like antibiotics), the availability of contraception was a significant contributor to that decline. Note that the numbers are per 100,000 live births; it doesn't show the number of women who died.

For reference: contraceptives were outlawed in the US in 1873 (they were never criminalized at all in most other western countries). They were federally legalized in 1918 though there were state laws that criminalized them in some states. They steadily grew in availability, variety, safety, reliability, legality (as various states changed their laws), and popularity. Condom use in particular boomed during and after World War 2. The first progestin pill was approved in 1957. Use of the pill gradually increased

throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By 1980, popularity had grown to the extent that, even though a 1930 ruling by the Pope that contraceptives were sinful was still in place, fully 80% of American Catholic women were using some form of contraception.

Preventing access to contraception is not a good way to try to control people's sexual behavior. You could say we already tried that experiment in the over a thousand years between the extinction of the plant that ancient women used until contraceptives became readily available in the mid 20th Century. The experiment failed. Instead of control, it led to death and misery, and many, many motherless children.

Since the language of the bill itself makes a good argument for passing it, I wanted to include a little historical perspective. I think it is useful and important to see why things developed in the first place.

Thank you.