

24106 At abortion clinic visit, Kamala Harris says the nation is confronting a ‘health care crisis.’

March 15th 2024, New York Times

Vice President Kamala Harris described the flood of laws restricting abortion access as a “health care crisis” as she visited with abortion providers and staff members on Thursday at a clinic in St. Paul, Minn.

The stop by Ms. Harris at the Planned Parenthood clinic was believed to be the first official visit by a vice president to an abortion clinic. No presidents are known to have made such visits, either. Speaking to reporters, Ms. Harris assailed conservative “extremists” for passing laws that restrict abortion, resulting in the denial of emergency care for pregnant women and the shuttering of clinics that provide reproductive health care beyond abortion.

The image alone of the nation’s second-ranking leader walking into an abortion clinic provided a vivid illustration of how the politics of abortion rights have transformed since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022.

For decades, many Democrats viewed affirmative support for abortion rights as a political risk, fearing such a position could alienate more moderate voters who were uncomfortable with open discussion of the procedure. The party embraced cautious slogans like “safe, legal and rare” and policies like banning taxpayer funding of abortions.

But the fall of *Roe* upended those politics, energizing a new generation of voters strongly committed to their support for abortion rights.

Biden’s strategists have run ads featuring the testimonials of women denied access to the procedure in conservative states and attacked former President Donald J. Trump for appointing three of the justices who voted to overturn *Roe*.

Mr. Biden has promised to restore federal abortion rights and preserve access to medication abortion. But Mr. Biden has still expressed some uneasiness with the procedure itself, often avoiding uttering the word “abortion.”

It is Ms. Harris who has emerged as the administration’s most forceful champion of abortion rights, touring the country to highlight the actions taken by the administration to preserve abortion access. She has taken a far more assertive approach than the president, holding meetings about the topic with hundreds of state lawmakers, meeting with abortion doctors and patients and speaking about the once-taboo issue in plain language.

Nearly all of her stops have been in Democratic-led states that have become havens for abortion seekers, as broad swaths of the South and the Midwest have ushered in more restrictive laws.

A doctor at the clinic said it had experienced a 25 percent increase in abortions and a 100 percent increase in out-of-state patients since *Roe* was overturned.

409 words