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Assemblyman Otis Statement on Supreme Court Decisions on Roe v. Wade and Gun Safety

In the past two days, the United States Supreme Court has issued decisions that appear more grounded in political ideology than the evolution of law and precedent in our country.

Today's radical decision on Roe v. Wade takes away the fundamental right of a woman to make her own reproductive medical decisions, including the right to choose to have an abortion. More broadly the case signals that the Supreme Court will be looking to take away the constitutional right to privacy in future decisions. Contraception, marriage equality, LGBTQ+ and other individual freedoms embedded in the well-established right to privacy are at risk.

Last week I attended the bill-signing ceremony for six state pieces of legislation we passed to further protect the rights of women and health care providers in anticipation of this decision. We had already passed the NYS Reproductive Health Act in 2019 to fortify our laws. New York had legalized abortion by statute three years before Roe v. Wade. Now that we have seen the court decision, we will look for further ways to protect reproductive rights in New York.

In overturning New York's pistol permit application law, the court has invalidated a New York statute that has existed for over 100 years to regulate concealed carry pistol permit licensing in our state. The specter of more guns in circulation at a time in which there is a nationwide rise in gun violence is of great concern. This decision will place law enforcement and the public at greater risk.

In anticipation of this decision, we have previously discussed the need for a Special Session of the Legislature to respond to the decision and adjust our laws to protect New Yorkers. Yesterday the Governor reaffirmed that pledge. Legal experts were already planning modifications in anticipation of the decision. Now that it has been issued, we will focus our drafting on the specifics of the decision and do all we can to protect the public from gun violence. A Special Session may come as early as next week.

In response to the mass shootings in Buffalo and around the country, we had already tightened New York gun safety laws based upon those events with passage of ten new bills this session. Congress is also taking some positive steps. New York will act quickly with further modifications in recognition of the decision. We remain determined to protect New Yorkers.

These two court decisions are clear breaks in precedent and reflect the transition of the Supreme Court to an institution driven by ideological agendas rather than legal analysis based on past cases and the evolution of the law as times change. These decisions take us back decades and portend further attacks on our rights, safety and respect for the law.

These decisions would not have been possible without the unprecedented violation of the Supreme Court appointment process whereby the Senate allowed for two Trump appointees that, under long-standing practice, would have been the nominees of his predecessor and successor.

For reproductive rights, gun safety and individual privacy, these decisions are

dangerous, outrageous and unacceptable. I have marched, rallied and sponsored new laws on these issues and will continue to play a forceful role in supporting our values through continued action in the legislature and with the governor.

June 24, 2022
