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[00:00:21] **Speaker 1** Good morning, everybody, and thank you for joining us here today as we make an important announcement about our continued fight for reproductive freedom.

[00:00:30] **Speaker 2** In the state of Wisconsin.

[00:00:32] **Speaker 1** Three months ago, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade, a ruling that effectively ripped reproductive freedom away from Wisconsinites and Americans across the country, effectively robbed them of their ability to make their own reproductive health care decisions without interference from politicians. This decision has thrown our state and our health care systems and the women into a state of unknowing and chaos. In Wisconsin, we still have an 1800s criminal abortion ban that's on the books that originated before the Civil War and Wisconsin. Women do not have the right to vote. And this would ban nearly all abortions, including cases of rape and incest if it goes back into effect. And now half the people of our state have fewer rights today than they did three months ago and fewer rights the mothers and grandmothers did before that.

[00:01:31] **Speaker 2** And that is. Yes.

[00:01:34] **Speaker 1** For months now, we've seen Republican legislators sit idly by as we've heard story after story of mothers, girls and patients who've had to deal with impossible situations trying to access the reproductive health care they need, and doctors forced into a possible positions where they can't serve the best interests of their patients. I've always promised I'd defend access to reproductive health care. I promised I'd veto legislation that would restrict reproductive rights. I've kept those promises, stood with Democratic legislators and an attorney general. Just call, as we call them, Republicans to do the right thing to repeal Wisconsin's archaic criminal abortion ban before the Supreme Court decision came down to make sure that women would retain the same rights they had.

[00:02:26] **Speaker 2** For nearly five decades.

[00:02:28] **Speaker 1** And when Republicans ignored our calls, I again stood with the Democratic leaders and called the legislature into a special session to repeal Wisconsin's criminal ban. Once after the court struck down Roe. Republicans chose to ignore the overwhelmingly majority of Wisconsinites. They refused to even debate or discuss a clean repeal of this archaic law. They failed to protect the reproductive freedom.

[00:02:55] **Speaker 2** Of people instead of Wisconsin.

[00:02:58] **Speaker 1** As I've said before, and I'll say it again today, we will not stop fighting for Wisconsin women. I said we would fight this decision to strip freedom away from millions in our state in every way we can and with every power we have. That's what we've done, and that's what we're going to continue to do. So I stand here in this room today. I want to note what's inscribed in the ceiling of this conference room. It's a phrase I've talked about a lot, actually. When a fourth graders come calling me and I talk about it to them and repeated it over the last three years, and it says the will of the people is the law of the land. Well, right now, today, when it comes to reproductive freedom, the will of the people isn't going anywhere. But it damn well should be, folks. It really should be. So today I'm announcing I'm calling another special session of the legislature to create a pathway for Wisconsinites to repeal Wisconsin's criminal abortion ban. At the end of the day, Wisconsinites and women in particular were not only stripped of their reproductive freedom, but they currently don't have a right to enact the change they need to protect that freedom without having to get permission from the legislature. That's just wrong, and it's time to change that. Unlike more than 20 states in the U.S., including Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin's current laws do not allow voters to change state law by referendum. Voters cannot introduce referenda or initiatives to be voted on by the people of Wisconsin. So I'll be calling out the legislature in this special session to take up a constitutional amendment, amendment that will enable the people of Wisconsin to go to referendum and repeal our 1849 era criminal abortion ban to ensure women across our state will go back to having the same rights now than they did the day before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade. And as of last week, this idea has new bipartisan support in Wisconsin. I agree with U.S. Senator Ron Johnson. And there is a sentence for you. If Republican legislators aren't going to uphold the will of the people and the people of the state should have the right to take a stand at the ballot box. Now, I also want to be clear today, it shouldn't have needed to get to this point, as far as I'm concerned, the right of a person to make their own reproductive health care decisions without interference from politicians is a fundamental freedom that shouldn't have to be voted on. It was a right for nearly 50 years. It was until June 23rd, and it still should be that way today. Victorian legislators should have listened to the will of the people and done the right thing for the last year that the people of Wisconsin and I have been asking them to do. And now, after working to delay litigation on this issue, stalling the certainty of the women that the women of Wisconsin deserve. Wisconsin Republicans have left no other choice, and they do, too. We all do. I know where Wisconsinites stand on this issue. This is about doing the right thing and protecting the freedom of half of this state's population. The will of the people should be the law of the land, period. So if that, I'll hand this over to someone who has been fighting for reproductive rights, along with her Democratic colleagues in the legislature. State Senator Carl Lewis. Senator.

[00:06:51] **Speaker 3** Thank you, Governor Evers. Someone you love will need an abortion. Many of you know, I was pregnant last year, and thankfully, everything went well. And I have a healthy one year old. But imagine being pregnant now with abortion unavailable in Wisconsin, knowing it's not the right time to bring a child into the world. Being scared. Imagine being pregnant now, knowing that something has gone horribly wrong with your wanted pregnancy and you go to the emergency room and you wait and you wonder, are the doctors and nurses there doing everything they can immediately to help you? Or are they themselves scared? Scared of being prosecuted, having not just losing their medical license, are being sued for being put in prison because the Republican legislators in this building have refused to do their job and repeal Wisconsin's draconian 1849 criminal abortion ban. Your future fertility is not a consideration. Preventing permanent disability is not a consideration. The only thing that the Republican led Legislature cares about is having the most extreme laws on the books. It's personal for me. This is personal for every woman in Wisconsin. It's personal for every person who could be pregnant and for every family. Someone you love will need an abortion. And the Republican led legislatures. Failure to act will harm them. Fundamental rights should never have to be put up for a vote. But unfortunately, in our state, Republican legislators have refused to hear the overwhelming voice of the will of the people. The vast majority of Wisconsinites, like Americans, want abortion to be safe and legal and accessible. Indeed, in the wake of massive victories for abortion rights supporters in deep red Kansas and the national show polling that shows just how angry and energized voters are that our rights have been taken away. Republicans are running scared. They're rushing to delete their websites and scrub them of their very extreme anti-choice positions. They're dodging reporters and constituents when they're confronted about the horrible results, the horrible stories that we're hearing all over the country and here in Wisconsin, thanks to their efforts to make abortion illegal and unavailable. But here in Wisconsin, Republican legislators feel emboldened. They can just ignore the will of the people because of their successful partizan gerrymandering, which is just as extreme as their drive to criminalize all abortion care. And that's why Governor Evers is once again leading the fight to restore the rights and freedoms that we have via direct voter participation in states where gerrymandered legislators, legislatures are no longer accountable and responsive to the will of the people, especially on fundamental issues like abortion rights. Letting voters have a say is the only way to protect a responsive democracy. My constituents want this over the summer and this fall, at listening sessions, at church, in my inbox, at coffee shops, I've had constituents ask me, Hey, why can't we do what they're doing in Michigan? Is there a way that we can vote on repealing that 1849 abortion limit? Why do we have to wait for Republicans in the legislature to do it? It's clearly unconstitutional, but it is nevertheless depriving thousands of Wisconsinites of care that is needed right now. So what can we do when our elected legislators refuse to listen? My constituents want a voice now, and Governor Evers proposal will give them one. I want to take over Evers for always standing up for our rights, our health, and for our democracy, and for always working to ensure that the will of the people is and shall be the law of the land. Thank you.

[00:10:38] **Speaker 1** Thank you, Senator.

[00:10:39] **Speaker 2** And as I said before.

[00:10:42] **Speaker 1** This concept.

[00:10:43] **Speaker 2** Isn't particularly new.

[00:10:45] **Speaker 1** Or.

[00:10:46] **Speaker 2** Novel. It's not the ceiling of this of.

[00:10:49] **Speaker 1** This room where all of the people of.

[00:10:52] **Speaker 2** Law of the land. Let's let the people be involved in this democracy so that we don't have to answer any questions before I go to the citizens and get on the ballot in 2013. Right. So why introduce it now? Well, very simply and you all are helping.

[00:11:14] **Speaker 1** Pushes forward is those stories that Senator I talked.

[00:11:18] **Speaker 2** About, those difficult decisions that are being made.

[00:11:21] **Speaker 1** Every single day in the state of Wisconsin. There's there's no.

[00:11:24] **Speaker 2** Doubt that most people.

[00:11:26] **Speaker 1** Don't understand how.

[00:11:29] **Speaker 2** These difficult this is not the easy ones, but the difficult ones.

[00:11:34] **Speaker 1** Are happening between women and their doctors every day in Wisconsin. You're covering it.

[00:11:40] **Speaker 2** We're all aware of this now.

[00:11:43] **Speaker 1** Not every not every birth ends at the same type.

[00:11:47] **Speaker 2** Of.

[00:11:48] **Speaker 1** Situation. So that said, the time.

[00:11:51] **Speaker 2** Is now because we have people.

[00:11:53] **Speaker 1** That are struggling.

[00:11:54] **Speaker 2** Right now.

[00:11:55] **Speaker 1** And you're right, it is going to take.

[00:11:56] **Speaker 2** Time and it has to be passed by to legislate. Legislative sessions, we want.

[00:12:03] **Speaker 1** To make sure people understand that we're working as hard as we.

[00:12:06] **Speaker 2** Can right now.

[00:12:08] **Speaker 3** What are the details you're seeing in the constitutional amendment? Is it just a right to an abortion in Wisconsin or would it set? Where abortions would be available. What are you saying?

[00:12:19] **Speaker 1** Well, that will be determined once we have the Constitution to provide the right to do this and then whoever decides.

[00:12:27] **Speaker 2** To take this challenge up. This is.

[00:12:31] **Speaker 1** People oriented, just like any other state.

[00:12:34] **Speaker 2** The wording of that will be developed by folks in the state of Wisconsin. Obviously legislators who play a role in some fashion.

[00:12:42] **Speaker 1** But it's driven by the people.

[00:12:45] **Speaker 2** So this amendment allows for referendums to be brought. So it's not.

[00:12:48] **Speaker 1** About what you're offering.

[00:12:50] **Speaker 3** Or anything?

[00:12:51] **Speaker 1** That's correct. The most important one right now.

[00:12:55] **Speaker 2** Is the one dealing with.

[00:12:58] **Speaker 1** Reproductive health.

[00:12:59] **Speaker 2** Governor, if talk with any of Republicans, why would you think that there's going to be any for now, especially since we're watching 50 days from an election? Well, first of all.

[00:13:06] **Speaker 1** I've heard it directly from Senator Johnson's, was.

[00:13:10] **Speaker 2** That he said, look, let's let the people take care of this.

[00:13:14] **Speaker 1** And we agree with them. We really we have not.

[00:13:19] **Speaker 2** Chatted with the guy with.

[00:13:20] **Speaker 1** Other Republicans.

[00:13:21] **Speaker 2** On this. So that's the ball's in their court as one of the.

[00:13:26] **Speaker 1** Leading Republicans.

[00:13:28] **Speaker 2** In the state of Wisconsin. He brought this up. We expect that we will have his support in December. So there's a lot of requirements to be placed on a ballot by the legislature the way people pay for it. It's the same type of initiative a person in all those other states. And so the topics would not be limited to.

[00:13:50] **Speaker 1** Abortion.

[00:13:51] **Speaker 2** In the future? No. I mean, you think about all of the items that in the state polling shows that the vast majority of people support the vast majority, and any one of those would eventually lose their way. This is this is the opportunity to work this out. The will of the people was the long land.

[00:14:15] **Speaker 3** So this is trying to get around a gerrymandered legislature, but it's also a passenger ship legislature. How confident are you that both sides together actually pass this?

[00:14:27] **Speaker 2** You never know. But when you have one of the leaders of the Republican Party in the state of Wisconsin saying, let the people decide. We'll see.

[00:14:38] **Speaker 3** Last question here.

[00:14:39] **Speaker 2** Governor, is this an issue Democratic voters are concerned about heading into the midterms? How big an issue is this? When you are out on the campaign trail, you talk about abortion. It's it's everywhere. And I hear from people, independents, I hear from Republicans that are just appalled by the fact that we're in this position, that we have 50.

[00:15:01] **Speaker 1** 50 years of rights.

[00:15:03] **Speaker 2** That suddenly disappear overnight and a legislature that is unwilling to even discuss it. That's disgusting.

[00:15:13] **Speaker 1** So, yes, I hear it from everybody.

[00:15:16] **Speaker 2** Not just not just I was a campaigner on this, but I hear it every day from regular folks that I have no idea what they're going to vote for me.

[00:15:28] **Speaker 3** Thanks, everybody.

[00:15:29] **Speaker 2** Thanks, everybody.