AMERICANS DO NOT SUPPORT ROE v. WADE

As a social scientist who has analyzed and written about polling data for many years, Bill Donohue is always taken aback when he encounters dishonest surveys. The latest example is a survey done by Gallup on the subject of abortion; it follows a pattern established by the Pew Research Center on this subject.

The survey results on abortion taken by these two polling institutions, both of which enjoy a good reputation, were recently cited by those worried that *Roe v. Wade* may be overturned.

On July 12, the *Hill* ran a headline, "Poll Finds Strong Support for *Roe v. Wade*," citing the results of a Gallup poll that was just released; similar headlines appeared in other media outlets.

Pew and Gallup dropped their standards in issuing these surveys. How? By taking a simple-minded approach to a complex issue.

Any poll that offers only two choices on an issue that most Americans have very mixed feelings about is dishonest. The researchers at Pew and Gallup know this to be true—they have even done surveys in the past that accurately tap how conflicted the public is on abortion—yet they undertook a poll that made it impossible to reveal the nuances.

The Gallup poll released July 12 asked respondents, "Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision concerning abortion, or not?" It found that 64% believe the ruling should stand and 28% want it overturned. In January 2017, Pew released its findings showing that the figures were 69% and 28%, respectively.

Last month Donohue wrote a news release titled, "Majority Oppose *Roe v. Wade*." According to the two polls he just cited, he must be wrong. But he is not. They are. To top things off, his proof comes by way of a Gallup poll released on June 11.

That poll found that 53% of Americans said abortion should be legal in only a few circumstances (35%) or in no circumstances (18%). This means that a majority of Americans reject abortion-on-demand, which is what *Roe v. Wade* rendered! Moreover, 48% said abortion is "morally wrong"; 43% disagreed.

His point is that by collapsing the survey responses to a "yes" or "no" on Roe does not get at the more nuanced responses that most Americans have about this issue. Most Americans do not think that abortion should be legal for any reason whatsoever, or for any time during pregnancy. Yet that is what *Roe* allows.