

# SUPREME COURT AFFIRMS RIGHTS OF PRO-LIFE ACTIVISTS

It was a great victory for abortion protesters. Thanks to pro-life activist Joe Scheidler, it will now be easier for those opposed to abortion to exercise their First Amendment rights.

On February 26, the U.S. Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision ruled that the federal Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, as well as the Hobbs Act, do not apply to abortion foes who protest outside abortion clinics.

Not only will abortion protesters be free from the threat of future RICO suits, but protesters of all causes will not have to labor under such threats. If there are clear cases of harassment or abuse of women seeking an abortion by abortion protesters, then there are plenty of laws on the books that can be used against them. But to use a remedy like RICO, or the Hobbs Act, both of which were meant to apply to gangsters engaged in extortion, as a way to protect abortion-seeking women from being intimidated by protesters, is outrageous.

"The real story here," we told the press, "is the extraordinary disrespect that the so-called champions of liberty have for free speech." The National Organization for Women, which brought the lawsuit, has proven beyond a doubt that it would use any law available as a weapon to beat down pro-life protesters. NARAL and Planned Parenthood have similarly shown their contempt for the First Amendment by previously supporting the use of RICO against anti-abortion demonstrators; even affiliates of the ACLU have used RICO to stop the free speech of abortion foes. We explained our reasoning by saying, "That's because abortion is their god: they would rather lose our fundamental civil liberties before they would ever lose the right of a woman to abort her baby."

Pro-life activists, many of whom are Catholic, can be proud of this victory. Even those who are not pro-life but still maintain fidelity to the First Amendment can feel a sigh of relief. "Most important," we concluded, "for the abortion-rights industry to try to muzzle the free speech of demonstrators by manipulating a law aimed at gangsters shows who the real fanatics are."