**Letter to the Editor**

I have been a proud member of the AMS for approximately 15 years, and I’ve kept my membership because I value what the AMS does in promoting mathematics research and education in the U.S. Publishing high-quality, affordable textbooks and journals, organizing regional and national math conferences, and providing valuable resources and advice to early career mathematicians are just a few of the activities that I am proud to support with my membership.

Recently, however, I was troubled to see two statements from the AMS which were more political than mathematical in nature. In late June, the Office of Government Relations (OGR) of the AMS released a two page statement (which subsequently appeared in the September issue of the *Notices*) in response to the recent Supreme Court decision regarding abortion ([https://www.ams.org/images/OnePager_GenderEquityAndInclusionFINAL.pdf](https://www.ams.org/images/OnePager_GenderEquityAndInclusionFINAL.pdf)). A few days later, President of the AMS Ruth Charney released a short statement endorsing a similar pro-abortion letter by the Association for Women in Mathematics ([https://www.ams.org/news?news_id=7040](https://www.ams.org/news?news_id=7040)). The statement by the OGR was unambiguous in its support for legalized abortion, stating that “access to safe abortion is an important part of good health care,” and that the ability of some states to ban or limit abortions carries “enormous danger for women.” These are highly charged political statements on an issue that has probably divided more Americans than any other political issue in the last 50 years.

The supposed mathematical justification for the AMS to weigh in on the abortion debate in America was primarily the concern that fewer women might earn STEM degrees. It is understandable that the AMS is concerned with issues which make it easier or more difficult for students to pursue education in mathematics, but the statement by the OGR appears to be a thinly veiled effort to promote a political agenda instead. Indeed, while an unplanned pregnancy might be a cause for a student to halt her education, only one “solution” is endorsed (abortion); completely absent are calls to support a woman through and after an unplanned pregnancy. The reality is that there will now be more students who are attempting to balance school with pregnancy and parenting. Does the AMS believe it is inevitable that more of these students will fail to graduate, or are there things we can do to help these women achieve their educational goals? (e.g., [https://thepregnantscholar.org/](https://thepregnantscholar.org/) has suggested best practices for administrators and faculty).

The AMS should be an organization that unites mathematicians of different political persuasions. Political statements such as the ones by the OGR and President Charney serve only to divide the AMS membership. It is highly unlikely that many opinions on abortion were changed by either of these statements—the abortion debate has been going on much too long for that. Rather, a message is sent by these statements that mathematicians with pro-life political views aren’t welcome in the AMS. On the contrary, I believe the AMS should be bigger and better than that. The AMS is an organization for all mathematicians. We may be politically liberal, conservative, socialist, or libertarian, but what brings us all together is our love for mathematics. Let’s keep the AMS a place where we can all feel welcomed.

— Jonathon Peterson

Purdue University

**Letter to the Editor**

On p. 1430 of the September 2022 *Notices*, the AMS officially proclaims its position in support of a national policy of abortion. The given rationale for this position is predictable, defaulting to the proposition that abortion is necessary for women’s reproductive health, and its availability facilitates women’s full access to the workforce. I need not enter into polemics here, except to note that the counter-argument stresses that every abortion kills a baby. That is indeed my position, and in good conscience I cannot be part of an organization which officially embraces what I believe is legally enshrined murder. Therefore, I herewith resign from the American Mathematical Society.

—Michael C. Berg, PhD

Emeritus Professor of Mathematics

The Seaver College of Science and Engineering

Loyola Marymount University

**A Problem of Choice**

With all the cancelled conferences and last-minute shifts to online formats we’ve had over the past two and a half years, I was very much looking forward to the in-person AMS Fall Western Sectional Meeting in October in Utah. AMS meetings are excellent opportunities to get up to speed
on current trends in an area, share recent results, network with colleagues, and reconnect with old friends.

But on June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court ruled that states can enact laws limiting access to healthcare for pregnant women. Thirty states had trigger laws which went into effect the same day, while several others have quickly moved to enact such laws since. Under laws such as Texas’s SB-8 and HB-1280, Tennessee’s “Heartbeat Bill,” and Utah’s HB-136, pregnant women could suffer serious medical complications or death while in these states due to restricted healthcare access. Furthermore, currently nine states have laws under which women who suffer natural miscarriages, a tragic but inevitable part of many pregnancies, could face criminal prosecution.

These facts present a serious obstacle to any woman of childbearing age who might want to travel to attend conferences in these or other states which restrict or criminalize abortion.

Access to safe health care, including abortion, is a human right.

I refuse to support financially, intellectually, or in any other way governments that deny basic human rights, including denying me full autonomy over my body. Our attendance at a conference in a state with laws restricting healthcare would legitimize the state’s regressive policies and would help to normalize the restriction of Human Rights and Women’s Rights. I refuse to be complicit.

Therefore, while I was looking forward to participating in the AMS Meeting in Utah, I must decline, and I urge you not to attend the upcoming AMS Fall Sectional meetings in Texas, Tennessee, or Utah.

In March 2021, the AMS Task Force on Understanding and Documenting the Historical Role of the AMS in Racial Discrimination completed its report, entitled “Towards a Fully Inclusive Mathematics Profession.” In the report, the Task Force states:

For instance, when the AMS held meetings at segregated institutions in the Deep South in the 1950s, many Black mathematicians were unable to participate fully. This was a practice that had a racist impact, even if the organizers were just following the accepted policies for hosting meetings. The failure of the AMS to account for and respond to the disparate effects of segregation, even after mathematicians raised objections to the AMS and called for change, makes these policies racist even if they don’t mention race.

Let’s do better this time. Let’s do more than issue statements decrying these laws while continuing to act as if these policies are acceptable. Silence is complicit, but so is inaction. Let’s stand together to ensure equal access to all AMS meetings for all AMS members. Please consider not attending, hosting, or otherwise supporting any professional meetings in states with laws denying access to healthcare. Please consider writing to the AMS leadership requesting scheduled conferences be moved to locations which support healthcare access and that all future meetings be held in such locations.

I realize a boycott of states with laws restricting healthcare will have unintended negative consequences for our colleagues who reside in such states. So, let’s mitigate those consequences. Let’s prioritize our travel funds for researchers who live in states with laws restricting healthcare to travel to conferences and seminars in states will full access. Let’s support our colleagues who live in restrictive states without supporting the dangerous and regressive policies of those states. This time, let’s solve the problem without compromising our principles of a full inclusive mathematics profession.

We, as professional mathematicians, have a choice to make. Please, choose the right one for the sake of all the women who no longer have choice.

—Professor Sami H. Assaf