

# Parting words on my summer with Lift Louisiana

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Hey guys! It's Anna with Lift Louisiana through the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health internship program.

Given that my last blog post was only two weeks into my internship, I'm not really sure where to start on this one. A whole summer leaves a lot to cover.

Through learning reproduction laws and landmark supreme court cases or enhancing my design skills with social media posts, my biggest takeaway from the internship is the importance of sharing knowledge and passion for a certain cause to influence policy decisions.

With Justice Kennedy's retirement and Trump's promise to appoint a pro-life justice, a lot was put at stake for the future of reproduction rights this summer. Lift's late June fundraiser scheduled to celebrate the two year anniversary of Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt quickly became a call to action to the organization's supporters rather than a festivity of progress.

While news headlines made it obvious that the Supreme Court's future composition could threaten the security of Roe v. Wade, I was less aware of the state-level policies that, in fact, have a more powerful and immediate effect on abortion access. If Kavanaugh is confirmed as a justice, the national right to abortion may be lost, but this is most dangerous in states with conservative courts and legislatures who will no longer be protected by a federal government that supports reproductive rights. In Louisiana, restrictive measures including a 15-week abortion ban, 72-hour waiting period, and an admitting privileges requirement are currently in litigation. With a conservative appeals court, we expect these will be signed into law, and a new pro-life justice in the Supreme Court is unlikely to question them. All but one abortion clinic would be forced to shut down.

I've spent the last few weeks of my internship creating a toolkit that encourages constituents to meet with their state and federal legislators to discuss issues and offer policy solutions. Knowing the extent of state-level politics in abortion accessibility, I took this project very seriously. Previously, I'd often negate the impact of local politics, but a potential change in the supreme court makeup elucidates the realities of federalism. And one of the positive aspects of our mixed system of government is that individuals do have sway, especially at local levels. Legislators can't be experts on everything, so individuals in positions of knowledge, passion, and privilege can maximize their rights by meeting with and influencing lawmakers and government officials. To me, this extends to using social media to share my opinions and experiences with others. I don't feel comfortable enough as an advocate to talk to a legislator yet, but I can take on a role of exposing the truth and starting the conversation with friends, peers, and other organizations.

As I finish my summer with NCI and Lift Louisiana I am extremely thankful for this opportunity. I've learned a lot about reproductive rights and the complicated politics

behind them as well as about my power in influencing social change. I feel more confident in my political economy/public policy major and have made connections that will propel me through the rest of my undergraduate career and into my professional life. I am excited to see what the future holds thanks to all the doors this internship has opened up for me.