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NCJWSTL Supports Lawsuit Challenging Abortion Bans That Violate Church-State Separation

Thirteen Clergy Members Challenge Missouri Abortion Bans that Impose One Religious Viewpoint on All Missourians, Denying Equality and Bodily Autonomy

The National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis (NCJWSTL) is proud to support a lawsuit filed today by Missouri clergy from six faith traditions, challenging the state's abortion bans and related restrictions as unconstitutionally imposing one narrow religious doctrine on all Missouri residents and thus violating the separation of church and state as laid out by the Missouri and federal constitutions. During a week that began with National Religious Freedom Day and ends with the 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, we join these faith leaders in the critically important task of challenging the Missouri abortion bans, which violate religious freedom and our state's promise of church-state separation.

The lawsuit, *Rev. Traci Blackmon v. State of Missouri*, delineates how Governor Parson and the Missouri Legislature violated the state constitution by enshrining their personal religious beliefs into law via House Bill No. 126, including the "trigger ban" that prohibited all abortions followed the U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022. NCJWSTL along with Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, the National Women's Law Center, and law firm Arnold & Porter back these thirteen faith leaders, whose religious beliefs call them to support abortion access because of the critical importance it holds for the health, autonomy, economic security, and equality of women and all who can become pregnant. While NCJWSTL is not a plaintiff, we are part of the coalition that brought the suit to Missouri in keeping with our core value of the importance of church-state separation. NCJWSTL is joined in support of this lawsuit by members of our Rabbis for Repro coalition, Congregations Shaare Emeth and Kol Rinah, Central Reform Congregation, Access MO, and the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Brian Silva, Vice President of Outreach & Engagement for Americans United: "There are already so many great groups like NCJWSTL doing great work in Missouri on this issue and collaboration is critical to respecting that work. So, we approach our role in this project by asking how we can add value to that work and be guided by our partners on the ground closest to the effects of the abortion ban."

Nancy Litz, NCJWSTL President: "Our Missouri Legislature has made it explicitly clear that their restrictions on a woman's right to make reproductive choices is founded in a narrow interpretation of a specific religious viewpoint. But our constitution is equally explicit that state government may not enact policies that give preference to one faith over others. Maintaining the clear separation between religion and the state is a critical protection for adherents of every faith or no faith – not just those who happen to wield governmental power."

Amy Hammerman, NCJWSTL State Policy Advocacy Chair: "In Judaism, we have an obligation to care for and to protect our bodies and our health and ensure all others can do the same. This means that no matter who we are, where we come from, and how much is in our bank account, we know that access to abortion care is an essential human right. It's our right to shape our families the way we choose, to access the health care we need, to decide when or whether we have children, and to choose how we shape our lives."

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