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News Item

Journalists covering abortion news are under attack | Scalawag

By Ashton Lattimore
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> What does it mean for a website to "encourage" abortion? New anti-abortion model legislation released last week by the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) would force anyone who publishes work online to grapple with that question, putting journalists who cover abortion squarely into legal crosshairs. The model legislation—which NRLC hopes will be adopted by state legislatures around the country—would subject people to criminal and civil penalties for "aiding or abetting" an abortion, including "hosting or maintaining a website, or providing internet service, that encourages or facilitates efforts to obtain an illegal abortion." Unsurprisingly, the text offers no guidance on how broadly or narrowly the provision might be interpreted: Does it cover an article on how medication abortion is accessible by mail, or reporting on the medical consensus that it's safe? What about a story on the opening of a new abortion clinic, or one covering the work of abortion care clinicians, advocates, and doulas? Is it too "encouraging" for a website to simply remind readers that despite the leaked draft Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs* v. *Whole Women's Health*, abortion remains legal, and people are free to keep their appointments? If so, along with abortion providers and advocates who already face constant surveillance, harassment, and violence from the U.S. anti-abortion movement, journalists at trusted news organizations like Prism, DAME Magazine, Rewire News Group, Scalawag, and others could face legal jeopardy simply for doing our jobs: fighting misinformation, and providing readers with up-to-date, deeply reported, and fact-based information that reflects the state of the nation and helps them navigate their place within it.
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