



CHAPTER  
II

EMPATHY  
AND  
EQUALITY

## IDEA 26

America must strike a balance between protecting women's rights to control their own reproductive health and our society's responsibility to protect human life.

For everyone, everywhere, abortion is a deeply moral and personal issue that turns on a question on which we may never reach a certain answer:

When does life begin?

In the realm of politics, our elected leaders must find a sustainable and inevitably imperfect compromise that balances the belief of most Americans that women have a right to control their own reproductive health and our society's responsibility to protect human life.

In America's abortion debate, there is only one thing that can be said with certainty.

**Most Americans do not support a total ban on abortion and most Americans do not support unlimited access to abortion at later stages of pregnancy.**

The politics of abortion is complicated and so is the science. When Florida prohibited abortions beyond six weeks in early 2023, the bill's supporters cited the fact that today's ultrasounds can detect a fetal heartbeat as early as five or six weeks into a

pregnancy. Meanwhile, those arguing against more restrictive abortion laws note that they could force women to carry a nonviable fetus to term because some genetic testing to detect catastrophic birth defects can't be done until 15 to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Although late-term abortions are one of the hottest flashpoints of the abortion debate, 94 percent of abortions in America are done before the fifteenth week of pregnancy.

Abortion is too important and complicated an issue to say it's common sense to pass a law—nationally or in the states—that draws a clear line at a certain stage of pregnancy.

But it is common sense that America will not find a sustainable abortion compromise most Americans can live with until we have more political leaders—especially a president—who don't seek to enflame and exploit our divisions on this issue but instead choose the path of empathy and respect.

## IDEA 27

# Every American deserves respect and freedom from discrimination.

When America was founded, a promise was made that citizens would enjoy full equality under the law.

It was a promise out of reach for too many Americans for far too long.

But over time, the arc of America, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., did “bend toward justice.”

Slaves were emancipated. Women were given the right to vote. Then came the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed discriminatory practices that were denying Black Americans the right to vote.

Later, gay marriage was enshrined as a right in federal law and the Supreme Court ruled that US civil rights laws protected gay, lesbian, and transgender Americans from workplace discrimination.

None of this progress was easy, but it was possible because Americans are fundamentally good people. It was possible because the vast majority of Americans reject racism, anti-Semitism, and hatred in all its forms.

We don't hear that enough from the forces of division in our politics and our media, but it's true. We're told Americans are consumed by hatred and intolerance, but even on the most divisive issues, the commonsense majority can point a clear way forward.

The latest contentious debate over transgender rights and discrimination is instructive.

Almost three-quarters of Americans:

- *Support laws that protect transgender individuals from discrimination in schools, work, and housing.*
- *Don't want sexuality and gender issues taught to young children in elementary schools and do want fairness in women's sports.*

If our leaders consider this controversial issue from a position of dignity, respect, and common sense, they can ensure all Americans have the full measure of respect and equality they deserve, while giving parents a say in when and how their kids learn about sensitive issues of gender and sexuality.

