



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on May 11, 2022

Woke PR Firm Advises Woke Blue-chip Clients to Avoid Abortion Issue

As major corporations go woke — with many of them edging toward going broke as a direct result — a major public-relations firm is privately cautioning its high-profile clients to stay mum on the leaked SCOTUS draft signaling the end of *Roe v. Wade*. Warning against taking “a stance you cannot reverse,” The PR firm Zeno refers to the abortion issue as an example of “50/50” or “no-win situations” that could “alienate” stakeholders.

In an internal communication [obtained by Popular Information](#), Zeno’s Executive Vice President for Media Strategy Katie Cwayna sent Zeno staff a “template email to share with client contacts” regarding the leaked SCOTUS draft. In the template, Zeno warns its blue-chip clients to avoid being played by the media. As Popular Information reports, the e-mail tells clients that “the media” will “look for corporations to take a stand and make their views known” and to avoid the bait, stating:



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Do not take a stance you cannot reverse, especially when the decision is not final. This topic is a textbook “50/50” issue. Subjects that divide the country can sometimes be no-win situations for companies because regardless of what they do they will alienate at least 15 to 30 percent of their stakeholders.... Do not assume that all of your employees, customers or investors share your view.

And while Zeno — which counts among its clients such household names as Coca-Cola, Salesforce, Hershey’s, Netflix, Starbucks, and others — considers the abortion issue a “50/50” issue, there is more to the story than that. As Popular Information reported, “While Cwayna claims overturning *Roe* is a “50/50” issue, 72% of Americans oppose overturning *Roe*, according to a January poll by Marquette Law School.”

As that poll [showed](#):

Forty-nine years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of a constitutional right to abortion, the public opposes overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling but is closely divided on limiting abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.



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A new Marquette Law School Poll national Supreme Court survey finds that, among those with an opinion on *Roe*, 28% say they are in favor of overturning the decision and 72% are opposed to overturning it. The case before the Court that includes argument for overturning *Roe*, *Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, concerns a Mississippi law that restricts abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Asked about that specific restriction, among those with an opinion, 49% favor that limitation on abortion, while 51% oppose it.

The survey was conducted Jan. 10-21, 2022, interviewing 1000 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points.

Two points regarding that poll need to be made here. First, a large number of Americans seem to have drunk deeply from the liberal Kool-aid, believing the lie that overturning *Roe* would ban abortion nationwide. In reality, overturning *Roe* would simply kick the issue back to the states to decide the issue state by state. It is well known among informed Americans that polls are only as good as their questions. And if those being polled do not have at least a basic understanding of the subject, the questions can be confusing. It is well within the boundaries of possibility (if not *probability*) that a great number of those polled misunderstood the question to be “Should the Supreme Court ban all abortions under all circumstances, at all times, and in all places?” Because that is the way liberal politicians, liberal activists, and liberal media have framed the issue.

Secondly, the abortion landscape has changed dramatically since Marquette’s January poll. More Americans have switched lanes and are in favor of overturning *Roe*. And while the Supreme Court is not a democratic body — it makes its decisions based on the constitutionality of an issue rather than on popular opinion — Zeno is the very antitheses of that. As a PR firm, all Zeno cares about is public perception. And — apparently reading the changing landscape — it is cautioning its clients to avoid “no-win situations” associated with wading into what is probably very close to a “50/50” issue.

Part of the strategy for avoiding fallout from the issue, according to Cwayna, is to be wary of the media. In her template communication for staff to reword and send off to clients, Cwayna wrote that media may not have those companies’ best interest at heart:

Avoid media “fishing.” Often during controversy, media will make general inquiries to multiple peer organizations, in which the first one to “raise its hand” becomes the lead. In a case like this, being at the center is not advisable so be judicious if/how general inquiries are managed.

Further, companies should avoid media — even to the degree of not making breaking announcements about their companies — lest media use the opportunity to ask about *Roe*:

Steer clear of breaking news networks/outlets. We anticipate the story will dominate newsfeeds for the rest of the week as more details unfold, so avoid pitching reporters and outlets that focus on breaking news.

Zeno warned its clients not only about legacy media, but about social media, as well, saying:

Do not engage with direct questions about your company’s position. Whether in direct messages or public-facing posts, do not respond to questions about where your company



stands on this issue.

This evidences a sharp “about face” from Zeno in its own approach to controversial issues. As Popular Information pointed out:

The advice in the template email contrasts with Zeno’s public-facing communications, which emphasize the importance of standing up for women’s rights.

Popular Information included a 2018 tweet from Zeno about standing up for women’s rights — which is a euphemism for abortion.

The article also addressed a March 2021 [statement](#) Zeno posted to its corporate website, stating that everyone must make “a commitment to a gender equal world” even when that means “speaking up in the face of inequality:

More than ever before, each of us must #ChooseToChallenge by making a commitment to a gender equal world. Whether reflecting on potential gender biases, mentoring the #nextgen of women leaders, or speaking up in the face of inequality in our everyday, everyone can — and must — play a part in the pursuit of gender equity.

And while most of its internal communications — and those with its clients — are not known, it is worth noting that Zeno’s client list includes companies that have not been shy (e.g., Coca-Cola, Salesforce, Netflix, and Starbucks) about engaging in controversial battles in the Culture Wars. Given that those companies pay Zeno substantial fees for advising on PR, one would rightly assume those companies value — and likely *follow* — the advice they pay so handsomely for. Since those companies have been vocal in their “public-facing” communications about abortion up until now, one is left to imagine that the advice to abandon that course for safer waters is new.

That, of course, would mean that ground once considered well under the Left’s control is no longer considered safe. The issue of abortion — long considered a liberal stronghold and “safe” for woke companies — is suddenly on the other side of the line. They seem to recognize that the hill of abortion has been taken by — or is at least soon to be taken by — conservatives. It is no longer “safe” for them to advocate their liberal position on that hill.

After Popular Information published their article, Zeno responded with a statement that could only have been crafted by a PR firm. Dripping with obvious spin, the statement read:

The email you reference does not accurately reflect Zeno’s position or the range of counsel that we are providing to clients.

It was meant to advise clients within the first 24 hours of breaking news, and its intent was to counsel clients to be measured in their immediate response to a complex developing story.

We take seriously our responsibility to help clients proactively navigate complex societal issues, consider the actions they may take, and the accompanying communications, internally and externally.



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We know and understand that companies are increasingly expected to take a stand on major issues, and we believe it's right to do so when it is authentic to the organization, and consistent with their values and actions.

At Zeno, we believe in equal access to healthcare for all, and a woman's right to make decisions about her healthcare. At the same time, we live in a world with different opinions and different views, and we respect those differences.

However, Zeno's e-mail template did not say "wait 24 hours before addressing breaking news," it said, "Do not take a stance you cannot reverse," and "Subjects that divide the country can sometimes be no-win situations for companies because regardless of what they do they will alienate at least 15 to 30 percent of their stakeholders." Rather than warning companies to wait out "the first 24 hours of breaking news," Zeno cautioned those companies to avoid issues that could be "no-win situations."

Furthermore, Zeno claims that while it believes in "equal access to healthcare for all, and a woman's right to make decisions about her healthcare," it also has "respect" for "different opinions and different views." But that is a demonstrable lie. Zeno's own public position — and the public position it appears to have advised for its clients up until now — is that abortion is a fundamental right and anyone who tries to take that right away from women is akin to a slave-master or a Nazi. But now, Zeno claims to "respect" the "opinions" and "views" of those who stand for life in a culture of death.

As America prepares to put the era of *Roe* in the past, Zeno and its woke clients are going to find themselves backtracking quite a bit to "proactively navigate complex societal issues." Because the road ahead appears to bear off to the Right.



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