

Judge: Women may lose abortion rights

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WINSTED — A Pennsylvania abortion case currently before the Supreme Court may not bode well for women's rights in general, according to Litchfield County Superior Court Judge Wendy W. Susco.

Susco and Winsted Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie addressed a group of 25 people at belated Law Day celebration at Northwestern Connecticut Community College last night.

The event, in honor of Law Day on May 1, was sponsored by the NCCC Law and Legal Assisting Society.

Susco told the predominantly female crowd that she fears women could lose their rights to purchase and use birth control if the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision granting women the right to abortion is overturned.

"If there is no right that each of us has to make decisions about procreation, then Griswold (a court decision granting contraceptive rights) also goes," she said. Susco said individual rights overall, and not just women's rights, are at stake.

Susco and LaVoie encouraged the audience, many of whom were from the NCCC legal assisting program, to use their knowledge of law to speak out against injustice wherever it is found, and to question accepted norms in their daily lives.

"In this society, we are taught to believe, not to think . . . how to make a buck, and not how to make a difference," LaVoie said. It is the responsibility of those

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familiar with law to share their knowledge and use it towards positive ends, she added.

"Only through informed citizenry . . . may the equal application of the law be attained and assured," she said.

Susco encouraged the group to speak out against sexual harassment in the work place, and warned that women cannot expect change if they choose to be silent on the subject. Many make the mistake of misinterpreting sexual harassment as a kind of flirtation, she said, when in actuality, the roots are far deeper.

"It's a way of keeping women in their place, and exerting power to keep power for yourself, to keep the competition down," she said.

Civil rights law as well as the Connecticut Fair Employment Act prohibit employers from discriminating against their employees on the basis of sex, while there are additional provisions against sexual harassment in the work place, she said.