

Giuliani Changes His Stance To Accept Right to Abortion

By FRANK LYNN

Rudolph W. Giuliani, clarifying once again his stance on abortion, completely accepted yesterday women's "right of choice" on abortion, except for a personal disclaimer.

Mr. Giuliani, who is seeking the Republican nomination for mayor of New York City, began the year advocating that the United States Supreme Court overturn the Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion in 1973. Yesterday, he said he "will oppose making abortion illegal." As late as last month, he said he had no position on what the Governor or the State Legislature should do about abortion.

Mr. Giuliani's statement yesterday was viewed as a "flip-flop" by Democratic mayoral contenders.

He insisted in an interview that he had not changed his position and that an overturn of Roe v. Wade would merely return the matter to the states. He said abortion had been legal in New York State at the time of the decision. He added that even before he became a formal candidate, he had opposed "criminal sanctions" for abortions.

'Placed in Doubt'

"The statement was a clarification," he said in a telephone interview, "because my position was placed in doubt by a lot of things that others said."

His statement represented the culmination of a struggle between the candidate who has consistently said he personally opposes abortions and his advisers who said he could not appeal to the general electorate with anything short of the "choice" stand adopted by many other Roman Catholic politicians, like Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

Such a position could hurt him in the Republican primary, in which Italian- and Irish-American Catholics constitute nearly half the voters. But his Republican opponent, Ronald Lauder, also supports the right to an abortion, though he opposes taxpayer financing.

The Giuliani position was settled in a meeting last Wednesday with top advisers and in a lengthy telephone conversation Thursday with Roger Ailes, his new media consultant, in anticipation of a Giuliani television interview.

Not only was the substance changed but also the style. The Giuliani position was now to be presented in a simple, straightforward manner without any

"waffling," as a top aide described it.

Yesterday's statement said: "As mayor, Rudy Giuliani will uphold a woman's right of choice to have an abortion. Giuliani will fund all city programs which provide abortions to insure that no woman is deprived of her right due to an inability to pay. He will oppose reductions in state funding. He will oppose making abortion illegal. Although Giuliani is personally opposed to abortion, his personal views will not interfere with his responsibilities as mayor."

Abortion has become a significant issue in the mayoral campaign since the Supreme Court ruled recently that states have a right to limit access to abortions.

The latest controversy was touched off yesterday when the New York Pro-Choice Coalition of Forest Hills, Queens, rated the mayoral candidates on the issues — giving Mayor Edward I. Koch and Borough President David N. Dinkins of Manhattan the highest ratings and Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Lauder the lowest.

Merle Hoffman, founder of the coalition, said, "We are leaning toward Dinkins because he most fully articulates the pro-choice agenda." She said the group was "disappointed" because the Mayor allowed Lincoln and Metropolitan Hospitals "to continue to restrict their abortion services because of their contract with the archdiocese" and because he did not favor the distribution of birth-control devices and condoms at school-based health clinics.

'Such an Outrage'

An angry Mr. Koch, said, "This is such an outrage that they would treat me this way."

"There is no mayor in this country who has done more for support of freedom of choice," he said. Mr. Koch said that if Mr. Dinkins were indeed poised to cancel the contract with the archdiocese, as the coalition indicated, "he should be ashamed."

He also criticized Mr. Giuliani, saying, "You shouldn't run from your conscience because you're afraid you're going to lose an election."

Of Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Dinkins, Richard Ravitch, a Democratic mayoral candidate, said, "We now have two flip-flop candidates."