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## Giuliani, campaigning in S.C., defends abortion stance

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani on Thursday defended his record favoring the use of public money for abortions, saying he wouldn't try to undo a Supreme Court ruling allowing the procedures.

"Ultimately I believe it's an individual right and a woman should make that choice," the former New York mayor said during a Statehouse news conference where he picked up three endorsements.

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Support for abortion rights is unpopular with conservatives who dominate the GOP in South Carolina, an early voting state.

"I tell people what I think. I tell them (to) evaluate me as I am and do not expect them to agree with me on everything. I don't agree with me on everything," Giuliani said. "If that's the most important thing, then I'm comfortable with the fact you won't vote for me."

The comments came as South Carolina lawmakers push a measure that would require women seeking abortions to first view ultrasound images of their fetus. If the South Carolina measure is approved, the state would be the first to make such a requirement. Other states require the images be made available to women.

Giuliani said states should make the call on such issues. "The Legislature of South Carolina should make its decision about that," he said. He also said states should make the decision whether to use public money for abortions.

Conservatives and political experts in South Carolina said Giuliani's moderate stance abortion will hamper his ability to win votes here.

"He's toast," said Clemson University political scientist Dave Woodard. "I think it's going to be really hard for him to overcome this in South Carolina."

While Republicans in South Carolina oppose abortion by degrees — allowing abortions in certain circumstances, such as a mother's health, rape or incest — there's little room on public financing, said Oran Smith, executive director of the Palmetto Family Council, an anti-abortion group.

"That's usually one of the first things off the list when you talk about things related to abortion," Smith said.

Some Giuliani supporters said the abortion issue doesn't bother them. "I'm really for the whole package. I feel like I'm comfortable

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being for him," said Rosemary Byerly, a staunch abortion opponent from Inman.

But Alexia Newman, a state Republican Party first vice chairwoman who runs Spartanburg's Carolina Pregnancy Center, said she felt duped by Giuliani's recent comments to the state Republican executive committee that if elected he would appoint judges who favor a strict interpretation of the Constitution to the Supreme Court.

However, Giuliani said those comments weren't a nod in the direction of undoing *Roe v. Wade*.

"If I'm going to appoint strict constructionist judges, which I'm going to do, for the reason that they are going to strictly interpret the Constitution, then, as president, I have to be a strict constructionist," Giuliani said. "The present state of the law on these issues is not something that I would seek to change."

Giuliani also said the state should be left to make its own decision about the Confederate flag, which flies outside the Statehouse.

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