



## Jessica Waters

Assistant Professor  
Justice, Law & Criminology

### Contact

✉ Jessica Waters ()

☎ (202) 885-6300 (tel:2028856300)

SPA | Justice, Law & Criminology

Kerwin Hall 251

### Additional Positions at AU

- Director SPA Leadership Program

### Degrees

JD American University Washington College of Law

BA American University

### Bio

Jessica L. Waters, J.D., has 25 years of experience as a lawyer, scholar, teacher, and higher education executive. She is a nationally recognized expert in the fields of higher education leadership, student success, and U.S. reproductive rights law and policy, working frequently with colleges and universities, law firms, trade associations, and non-profit organizations.

Waters currently serves as the Director of the American University School of Public Affairs (SPA) Leadership Program where she focuses on equipping students with experience, skills, and knowledge to prepare them for leadership roles in public service. Professor Waters is also a Faculty Fellow in the Center for University Excellence, which brings university research expertise to pressing problems in the public domain.

Waters recently served for seven years as American University's first Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost for Academic Student Services (2016-2023) after holding multiple

leadership positions at the university. As Vice Provost and Dean, she was the leader and principal decision-maker regarding American University's undergraduate curriculum and academic supports and was charged with strategic decision-making and risk assessment for university-wide undergraduate policies and procedures. She has particular expertise with evaluating and designing advising and academic support structures, leading curricular change (including university-wide general education reform), and implementing equity-centered student success policies and programs. Waters has led, with a focus on empathy and equity, team expansions, university staff restructures, and university-wide policy change.

Her research focuses on reproductive rights law and policy, particularly exploring questions related to the legal impact of women's medical decisions during pregnancy and childbirth, abortion regulation and access, state control of reproductive decision-making, employment-based conscience protections for reproductive health care providers, and reproductive rights of employees working for religiously affiliated employers. Her work has been published in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, the *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law*, the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, and the *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. Waters is a frequent media expert and commentator for local, regional, and national outlets (CNN, Fox News, NPR, NBC, VOA, BBC). She delivered a 2016 TedX talk, *Changing the Reproductive Rights Conversation*, and has recently authored op-eds for *The Hill* and *USA Today*.

Prior to joining to joining the AU faculty full-time, Professor Waters was a litigator at WilmerHale, where she specialized in criminal defense litigation, internal investigations, and reproductive rights litigation and advocacy. She also clerked for the Honorable Emmet Sullivan on the D.C. District Court. Professor Waters also previously served on the Children's Law Center Advisory Board, and as a guardian ad litem in the D.C. courts.

## For the Media

To request an interview for a news story, call AU Communications at [202-885-5950](tel:202-885-5950) (tel:2028855950) or submit a request (</media/request-an-interview.cfm>).

**AU Experts** ▼

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# Teaching

## Summer 2024

- JLC-436 Reproduction and the Law

## Fall 2024

- JLC-101 Introduction to Law
- JLC-436 Reproduction and the Law
- SPA-075 Changemakers Series: Reproductive Justice

## 2024 Term 4

- KSB-630 Business Capitals Immersion: Employment Law

## Spring 2025

- JLC-436 Reproduction and the Law
  - SPA-220 The American Constitution
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# Scholarly, Creative & Professional Activities

## Work In Progress

### Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

Outstanding Teaching in a Multi-Year Appointment, Department of Justice, Law and Society (2013)

American University Outstanding Teaching in a Term Faculty Appointment (2013)

School Of Public Affairs Outstanding Teaching in a Term Faculty Appointment (2012)

Chair's Award for Exemplary Service, Department of Justice, Law and Society (2011)

### Selected Publications

Jessica L. Waters and Madelyn Adams, [Fetal Personhood Rulings Could Nullify a Pregnant Person's End of Life Wishes](https://theconversation.com/fetal-personhood-rulings-could-nullify-a-pregnant-patients-wishes-for-end-of-life-care-224870) (<https://theconversation.com/fetal-personhood-rulings-could-nullify-a-pregnant-patients-wishes-for-end-of-life-care-224870>), The Conversation, (March 2024)

Jessica L. Waters, [Why Are We Surprised that IVF is Part of the Assault on Reproductive Freedom?](https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/4491315-why-are-we-surprised-ivf-is-part-of-the-assault-on-reproductive-freedom/) (<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/4491315-why-are-we-surprised-ivf-is-part-of-the-assault-on-reproductive-freedom/>), The Hill (Feb 2024)

Jessica L Waters, [The Dangers of Spotlighting the Perfect Abortion Patient](https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/4437757-the-dangers-of-spotlighting-the-perfect-abortion-patient/) (<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/4437757-the-dangers-of-spotlighting-the-perfect-abortion-patient/>), The Hill (January 2024)

Pay attention: The abortion pill is the next target for a national ban | The Hill (<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/4323080-pay-attention-the-abortion-pill-is-the-next-target-for-a-national-ban/>)

Texas six-week abortion ban promotes anti-choice extremist violence (usatoday.com) (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2021/09/02/texas-abortion-ban-six-week-choice-violence-bounty-supreme-court/5697770001/>)

**Jessica L. Waters**, *Untangling The Reproductive Rights and Religious Liberty Knot* [Yale Journal of Law and Feminism](#))

**Jessica L. Waters** and Lynn A. Addington, *The Marshall-Brennan Effect: The Benefits of Teaching Constitutional Literacy for Law Students*, 90 Denver University Law Review (2013)

**Jessica L. Waters**, *Testing Hosanna Tabor: The Implications for Pregnancy Discrimination Claims and Employees' Reproductive Rights*, 8 Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (2013)

Lynn A. Addington and **Jessica L. Waters**, *Public Interest 101: Using the Law School Curriculum to Quell Public Interest Drift and Expand Students' Public Interest Commitment*, 21 Journal of Gender, Social Policy, and the Law 79 (2012)

Stephanie Sterling and **Jessica Waters**, *Beyond Religious Refusals: The Case for Protecting Health Care Workers' Provision of Care*, 34 Harvard Journal of Law and Gender (2011)

**Jessica Waters**, *In Whose Best Interest?: New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services v. V.M. and B.G. and The Next Wave of Court-Controlled Pregnancies*, 34 Harvard Journal of Law and Gender 81 (2011)

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## **AU Experts**

### **Area of Expertise**

abortion, reproductive rights, women and politics, women's issues, reproductive rights

### **Additional Information**

Jessica Waters focuses her research primarily on reproductive rights law. Her recent work has explored questions related to the legal impact of women's medical decisions during pregnancy and childbirth, employment-based conscience protections for reproductive health care providers, and the reproductive rights of employees working for religiously affiliated employers. Her work has been published in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, the *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law*, and the *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. Prior to joining to joining the AU faculty full-time, Waters was an adjunct professor at Washington College of Law and a litigator at WilmerHale, where she specialized in criminal defense litigation, internal investigations, and reproductive rights litigation and advocacy. She also clerked for the Honorable Emmet Sullivan on the D.C. District

Court. Waters previously worked at a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting access to reproductive health care. Professor Waters also serves as the Chair of the Children's Law Center Advisory Board, and is a guardian ad litem in the D.C. courts.

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## Related Links

- [AU Media Relations \(/media/au-experts/\)](/media/au-experts/)
- [All AU Faculty Experts \(/media/auexperts.cfm\)](/media/auexperts.cfm)

## Also of Interest

Saul Newman (<https://www.american.edu/spa/faculty/snewman.cfm>) |

Jess O'Connell WeLead Speaker (<https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/welead/jess-oconnell-speaker.cfm>) |

William LeoGrande (<https://www.american.edu/spa/faculty/wleogra.cfm>)

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