

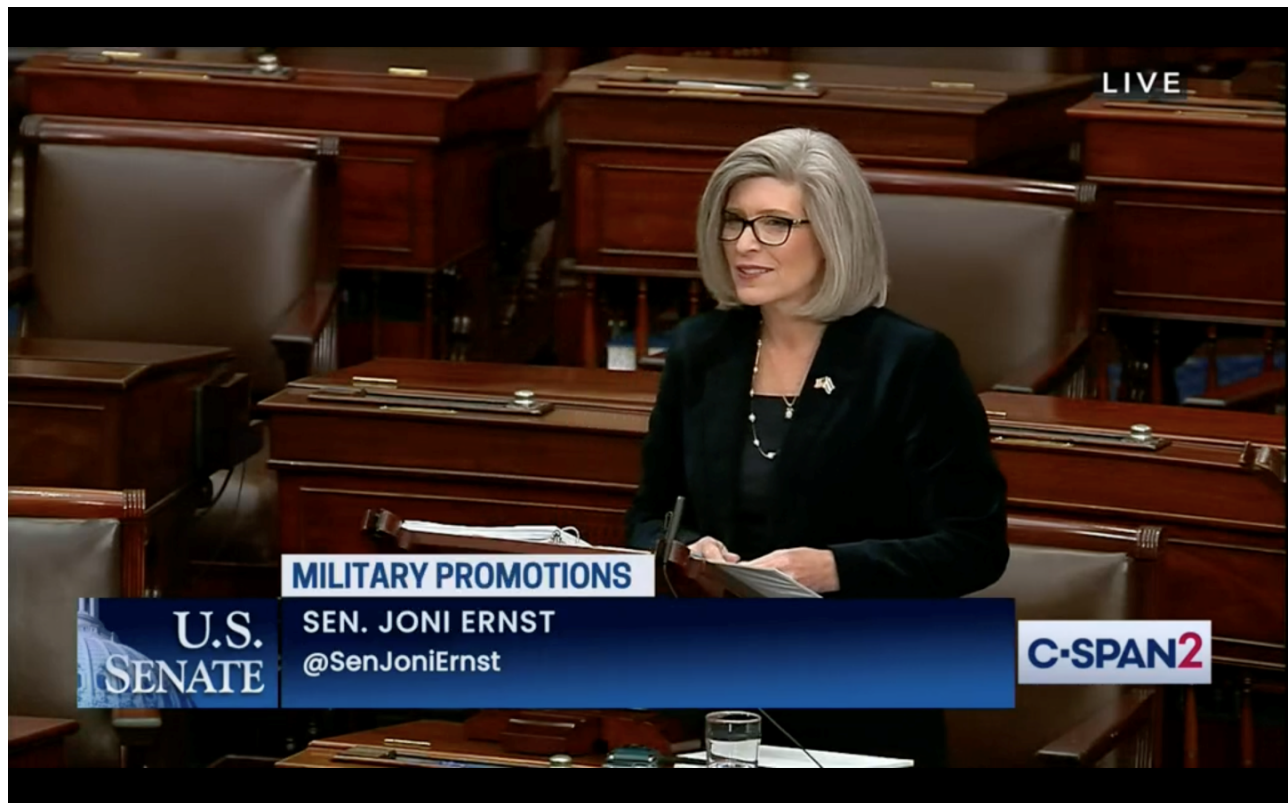
News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



Four Republican senators, including veteran Joni Ernst, call on Sen. Tommy Tuberville to lift his hold on hundreds of military nominees, which the Alabama senator frames as a protest of the Pentagon's abortion policy.

(C-SPAN screenshot)

While the biggest news out of Washington, D.C., this week was arguably the [aversion](#) of a Thanksgiving government shutdown, four U.S. Senate Republicans also held the floor for hours, pleading with an Alabama senator to roll back his protest against the Pentagon's abortion policy.

U.S. Sens. **Dan Sullivan** of Alaska, **Todd Young** of Indiana, **Joni Ernst** of Iowa and **Lindsey**

Graham of South Carolina asked **Tommy Tuberville** to allow the unanimous confirmation of two military leaders set for promotions, making their case until about 4 a.m. Thursday morning, [States Newsroom](#) reports.

Ernst, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Iowa Army National Guard, said she attempted to change the reproductive health care policy through legislation. Still, she asked Tuberville to budge and allow voice votes on the nominees one by one.

“I also do not relish that I am standing on the floor this (morning) as we try to bring these nominations forward, but I understand the national security risks that are out there and the detriment to readiness” due to Tuberville’s hold.

The backlog is growing, warned Sullivan, a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Tuberville’s held up unanimous consent for 359 military nominees since February, according to the Pentagon. Officials predict the list could swell to between 650 and 850 by year’s end if the senator maintains his blockade.

Sen. **Mike Lee**, a Utah Republican, objected to the group's request, defending the GOP’s right to block nominations as leverage. Lee also mentioned his own disdain for the Defense Department’s policy that reimburses travel for abortion and other reproductive health care for service members stationed in restrictive states.

Tuberville was present during some of the speeches but didn’t respond.

Graham agreed with his colleague’s reasoning but said this issue should be settled in the courts.

“How do you right wrongs? You don’t create another wrong,” he said. The senior South Carolina senator suggested Republicans should work with attorney **Jay Sekulow**, an abortion legal expert and chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative legal group.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Ohio Senate President mulls 15-week abortion ban despite Issue 1’s success



*Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman floated the idea of further restricting abortion access, even though voters overwhelmingly passed a reproductive rights amendment on Nov. 7.
(Graham Stokes/Ohio Capital Journal)*

Sen. Matt Huffman is considering whether to push for restricting abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reports. “People mentioned the 15 weeks and the exceptions and things like that,” Huffman said. **The Senate president’s statement comes a week after voters approved Issue 1, a constitutional amendment guaranteeing abortion rights through fetal viability, among other protections.** On election night, he said Issue 1’s victory wouldn’t be the end of the debate, and repeal efforts were on the table. But Huffman hedged this week, saying an anti-abortion rights measure would not be on the ballot anytime soon.

Huffman’s comments [differ](#) from the Ohio House speaker’s reaction to the amendment’s approval by voters. **Rep. Jason Stephens said now is not the time to keep fighting Issue 1 and emphasized a focus on improving maternal and child health outcomes. He brushed off calls to give the legislature power over whether to implement the new amendment.** That proposal, which would strip away the judiciary’s ability to apply Issue 1, is backed by GOP Reps. Jennifer Gross, Bill Dean, Melanie Miller and Beth Lear. Fellow Republicans label the quartet as extreme, according to the Capital-Journal. **The four legislators have expressed anti-vaccination sentiments, peddled conspiracy theories and scorned equal rights for LGBTQ+ people.**

Mississippi officials prosecute pregnant women accused of using drugs

In 2010, Mississippi voters rejected an amendment that would have enshrined fetal personhood into the state constitution. But that hasn't stopped law enforcement from prosecuting women whose newborns test positive for drugs, [Mississippi Today and The Marshall Project](#) report. Officials in Monroe and Jones Counties have pursued the most cases against women who used drugs while pregnant. **Because fetal personhood isn't a law in the state, prosecutors have used child endangerment statutes or charged women with poisoning their fetuses, even if the babies are born healthy.**

Women facing charges often take a plea deal to avoid prison time, defense lawyers said.

"They're not wanting to take that risk of going to trial and getting convicted because they're all fighting to get their kids back," said attorney Luanne Thompson. Most of her clients have been able to avoid prison time and have their records cleared if they meet their probation terms.

Public health experts fear the cases could make those who are pregnant avoid prenatal care in the state, which has the nation's highest infant mortality rate.

Mississippi Health Officer Daniel Edney, an addiction specialist, has vowed to improve maternal and child health outcomes and said pursuing mothers who have substance use disorders will diminish those goals. "We don't need law enforcement going in to arrest women who are trying to get help," Edney said. "It has a chilling effect on the women out there who are trying to decide what they need to do."

Connecticut advocates protest rural maternity ward's closure

Maternal health advocates rallied outside the Connecticut State Capitol Monday night to protest the closure of Windham Hospital's labor and delivery unit, our partner newsroom [CT Mirror](#) reports. **Officials at three rural hospitals across the state are seeking to end birthing services, part of an ongoing trend across the nation.** "This is how you kill a small city," said Rodney Alexander, a town council member in Willimantic, a census-designated place within Windham. "How can you convince a young couple to move to Willimantic, raise a family, with no maternity ward?" Alexander asked.

Hartford HealthCare, the company that owns Windham Hospital, stopped delivering babies in June 2020 before filing an application with the state to shut down the maternity ward for good, citing safety concerns and a provider shortage. **Connecticut's Office of Health Strategy issued an initial [denial](#) of the closure request last year.** A union representing

nurses and hospital staff urged the state to stand by its decision. “More than that, we’re asking Hartford HealthCare to do the right thing: Restore the birthing center, without the state forcing its hand,” said John Brady, AFT CT’s executive vice president.

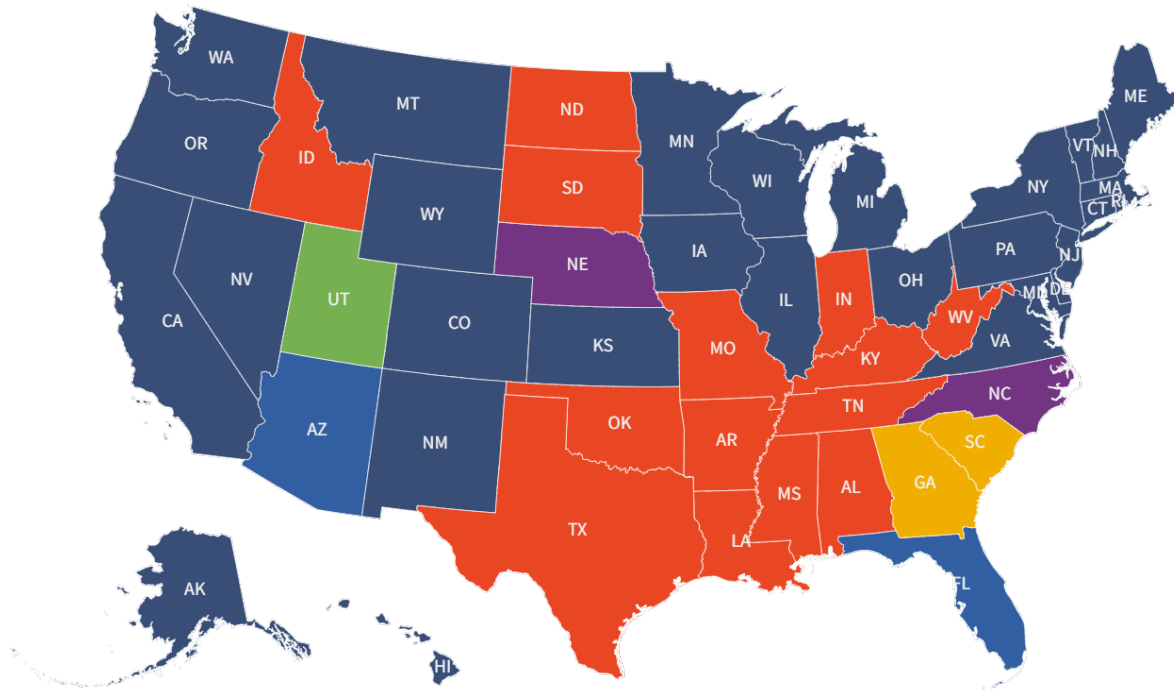
THE PULL *Commentary from North Carolina*

“Indeed, if it were parental rights and prerogatives that the conservative crusaders were truly concerned about, they would pass laws requiring parental consent for carrying pregnancies to term. That they don’t do so makes clear that the real and overriding objective of such laws is preventing abortions — not validating parental rights.” — **Rob Schofield**, editor, [NC Newsline](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody doubled down on her criticism of an abortion rights petition, arguing in a court filing that the measure could allow providers to self-regulate. ([Florida Phoenix](#))
- The Pennsylvania House passed a bill that would protect out-of-state abortion patients from prosecution. ([Pennsylvania-Capital Star](#))
- In the race for a Utah congressional seat, Republican Celeste Maloy has voiced support for a federal abortion ban, while Democrat state Sen. Kathleen Riebe has a record of opposing restrictions. ([The Salt-Lake Tribune](#))
- U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson led a decades-long legal battle against a Louisiana abortion provider and encouraged lawmakers to regulate clinics. ([The New York Times](#))
- Patchwork regulation of midwifery makes it difficult to punish those who’ve been accused of wrongdoing, as the case of one Maryland practitioner who’s been the focus of several investigations illustrates. ([The Washington Post](#))

STATE BY STATE *Abortion access in the U.S.*



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