

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Protect Our Rights of Nebraska has initiated an abortion rights petition campaign. Republican officials in Florida, Nebraska and Missouri — all states with various degrees of restrictions — are actively opposing citizen-led ballot initiatives to restore access.*

*(Aaron Sanderford/Nebraska Examiner)*

Reproductive rights advocates across the country are working to put abortion protection measures on the ballot next year, but Republican officials are trying to stymie those efforts.

In **Florida**, **Attorney General Ashley Moody** and major anti-abortion groups have submitted briefs to the state Supreme Court, urging the justices to reject a petition that aims to guarantee abortion access through fetal viability. Florida's high court must review the proposal since organizers met the threshold for signatures.

The lack of action from the Florida Supreme Court — which has yet to set a hearing on Moody's arguments or rule on the constitutionality of a 15-week abortion ban — has delayed a key committee report, [Florida Phoenix](#) reports. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference, a group of economists, is tasked with determining the potential costs associated with initiatives.

Last week, **the panel said it cannot provide that information without a high court decision on the 15-week restriction**, which could enact a pending six-week ban. "In order to measure the proposed amendment's impact on state and local government revenues and costs, a reasonable expectation of what the state of the law will be at the time of the election is required," the economists wrote on Thursday.

For their part, Republican lawmakers in **Nebraska** who oppose abortion have dismissed the goals of Protect Our Rights, a reproductive rights group that recently launched a ballot initiative campaign. It aims to restore abortion access — currently banned after 12 weeks, aside from rape and incest exceptions or to save a mother's life — through fetal viability or to protect a patient's health or life, [Nebraska Examiner](#) reports.

"We should be able to get the care that we need in compassion and privacy without political interference," said Ashlei Spivey, a Protect Our Rights leader, at a recent press conference. The effort will need more than 120,000 petition signatures by July.

**Gov. Jim Pillen and the state's leading anti-abortion groups are confident that voters will not approve the measure if it makes the November 2024 ballot. Still, Pillen and his allies have pledged to oppose the amendment, which he called "extreme."**

Meanwhile, Missouri's Republican leaders continue to challenge several abortion rights petitions in the works. **Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, a GOP gubernatorial candidate, is appealing a court decision condemning his ballot summaries to the high court**, [Missouri Independent](#) reports.

Two courts have determined titles Ashcroft wrote for a petition filed in March are biased and "replete with politically partisan language." But he hopes that the state Supreme Court will rule in his favor, Ashcroft told the Independent. A Republican operative behind a newer, more moderate effort to restore access in the state, which outlaws most abortions, is also [suing](#) the secretary of state over his ballot summaries.

Ashcroft's opposition to abortion rights parallels the actions of **Attorney General Andrew Bailey**, who tried to pressure the state auditor into inflating the estimated costs of the petition. Bailey resisted court rulings telling him to sign-off on the fiscal note, until the state

Supreme Court [rejected](#) his request this summer.

Litigation over the two different abortion petitions has stopped both sides from starting the signature-gathering process. Reproductive rights advocates are divided on which option they should back, the [Independent](#) reports.

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## South Carolina Supreme Court rejects six-week abortion ban challenge



*Without explanation, South Carolina Supreme Court justices unanimously rejected providers' request to review a six-week abortion ban's language.*

*(Mary Ann Chastain/SC Daily Gazette)*

The all-male South Carolina Supreme Court refused to hear a challenge brought by providers against the state's six-week abortion ban, [SC Daily Gazette](#) reports. **Planned Parenthood South Atlantic and Greenville Women's Clinic asked the court to discern when embryonic or fetal cardiac activity can be heard via ultrasounds during pregnancy.** In a unanimous decision issued last week, the justices also refused to halt the law if plaintiffs take the case back to the lower courts. They didn't provide a reason in the four-sentence order.

Jenny Black, the president and CEO of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, said the organization was “deeply disappointed” that the court refused to clarify the law’s “ambiguous language.” A spokesperson for Republican Gov. Henry McMaster said he is prepared to defend the law should providers sue the state again. **In August, South Carolina’s high court upheld the six-week restriction in a 4-1 decision, despite rejecting a similar ban in January.** Kaye Hearn, the court’s only woman justice who authored the earlier opinion, [retired](#) in February.

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## Maryland Latino activists call for sex education standards, health equity

Lawmakers in Maryland passed a bill this spring that will put a reproductive rights [ballot measure](#) before voters next year, and the state already protected abortion access up to fetal viability in 1992. But **Latinos Unidos, a nonprofit that advocates for the state’s Latinx and immigrant communities, said more can be done on the ground to improve reproductive health and sexual education,** [Maryland Matters](#) reports. Veronica Cool, the group’s at-large executive committee member, called for state legislation that would set **baseline requirements for reproductive health access,** such as providing period products and nursing accommodations.

**“There’s been this conflation of equating reproductive health to only abortion,”** said Bridget Kelly, a doctoral public health student at George Washington University. She noted that lawmakers in other states have hinted at restricting contraception, which could affect people who use birth control to manage menstrual pain or endometriosis. Kelly said advocating for the full spectrum of reproductive rights, providing culturally congruent care and making medical school more accessible could indirectly help migrant populations.

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## Wyoming abortion clinic set to close due to financial strain

A Jackson, Wyoming abortion clinic plans to close next month, leaving the state with one abortion clinic, our partner newsroom [WyoFile](#) reports. **Providers at Women’s Health & Family Care clinic said high rent and operating costs forced them to cease operations.** “We’ve been open for 30 years, and we’ve all been in the community for a long time,” said Dr. Giovannina Anthony. “And to let it go has been really, really hard.” Anthony is a plaintiff in the lawsuit challenging two of the state’s blocked abortion bans. A hearing in the case is set for Dec. 14, just one day before the Jackson clinic is slated to shut down.

**The decision leaves one option for clinician-provided abortion care.** Wellspring Health Access in Casper — [a woman set fire to the building last year](#), causing a delayed opening — is already the only provider in the state offering surgical abortions. Julie Burkhart, president of the Casper clinic, lamented the closure of the Jackson facility. “Patients deserve access to safe, legal abortion care in their communities, and the loss of this provider will make it even more onerous to patients from across the region.” Just the Pill, an online medication abortion provider, also offers services in Wyoming.

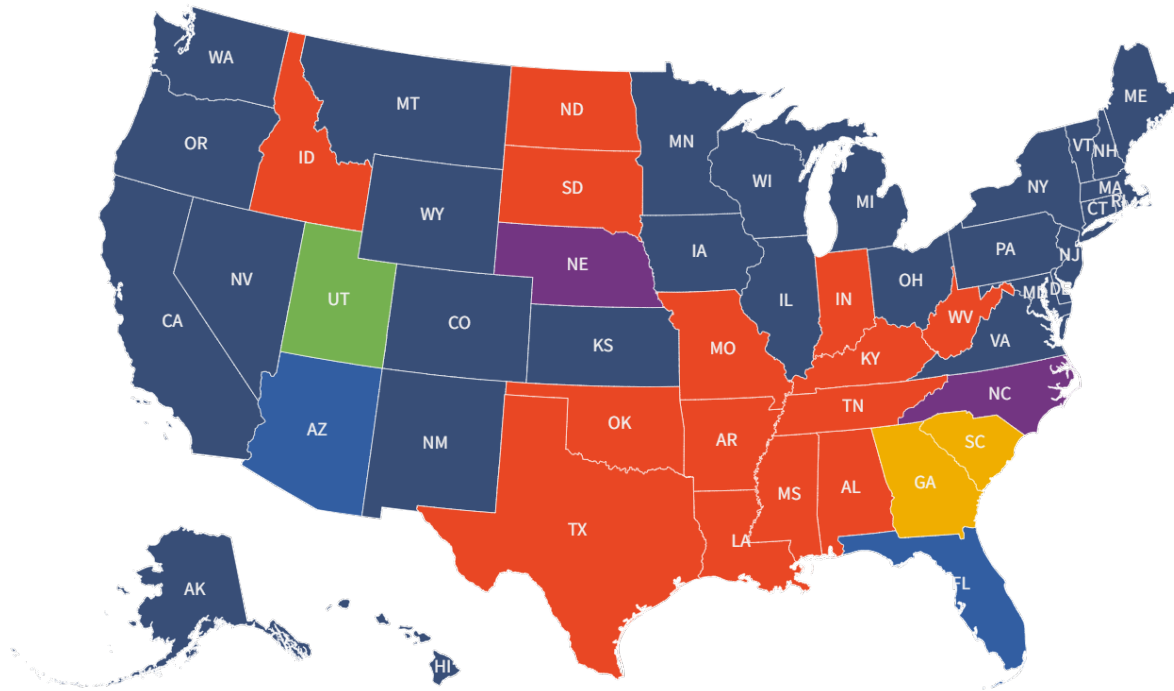
### **THE PULL** *Commentary from Indiana*

“Paid leave is an urgent need that has significant health, financial and relational consequences for families and businesses. For Indiana to truly be a state that works for everyone, we need legislation that provides paid family and medical leave to all Hoosiers.” — **Richard Petts**, Ball State University sociology professor, [Indiana Capital Chronicle](#)

### **THE PULSE** *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- At least 46 California hospitals have ended labor and delivery services since 2012, including 11 maternity ward closures this year. ([CalMatters](#))
- Pennsylvania lawmakers passed legislation requiring providers to get consent before performing pelvic, prostate or rectal exams on anesthetized patients. ([Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#))
- Public health officials in Massachusetts plan to ease regulations on birth centers, create a doula certification process and expand home nursing programs for new mothers. ([WBUR](#))
- Catholic bishops listed abortion as one of their top priorities during a national conference last week. ([The New York Times](#))
- Most states ban shackling pregnant people in jails and prisons, but there are still countless reports of officers restraining them. ([KFF Health News](#))

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



Open this interactive map in your browser

Track state-level developments on reproductive rights anytime at [News From The States](#). Send tips and thoughts to [ebrown@statesnewsroom.com](mailto:ebrown@statesnewsroom.com), and follow her on Twitter [@elishacbrown](#).

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