

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Sofia Resnick



*GOP presidential candidates, from left, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Vivek Ramaswamy participate in the NBC News Republican Presidential Primary Debate at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County on Nov. 8, 2023, in Miami. Five presidential hopefuls squared off in the third Republican primary debate as former U.S. President Donald Trump, currently facing indictments in four locations, declined again to participate.
(Joe Raedle/Getty Images)*

Republican candidates for president reversed their previous abortion policy stances during Wednesday night's debate in Miami, which followed an election that featured strong wins for abortion rights, [States Newsroom reported](#). The candidates this time included former New Jersey Gov. **Chris Christie**, Florida Gov. **Ron DeSantis**, former United Nations Ambassador **Nikki Haley**, biotech entrepreneur **Vivek Ramaswamy**, and U.S. Sen. **Tim**

Scott of South Carolina. Republican frontrunner and former President Donald Trump, who has been indicted in four separate cases, once again skipped the debate.

The candidates universally oppose abortion rights, but in the wake of [Tuesday's crushing GOP losses](#), DeSantis and Haley **abandoned previous discussions of national bans** and echoed Christie's [previous position](#) that the states should be left to decide their own abortion laws.

"The founders were really smart," Christie said. "And this is an issue that should be decided in each state. I trust the people of this country, state-by-state, to make the call for themselves."

Scott said he is "100% pro-life" and would sign a federal ban at 15 weeks. But **Haley said any federal abortion ban would be unrealistic** because it would need 60 votes in a U.S. Senate currently controlled by Democrats. She suggested abortion opponents and supporters should work together to expand access to contraception and adoption.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Federal judge blocks Idaho 'abortion trafficking' law

A federal judge temporarily blocked Idaho's controversial "abortion trafficking" law on Wednesday, the [Idaho Capital Sun](#) reported.

The new law, which took effect in May, poses a potential **two-to-five-year prison sentence** for an adult who transports an unemancipated minor across state lines for an abortion or helps procure abortion-inducing drugs without consent from the minor's parent or guardian. **Abortion remains illegal in Idaho**, except to save the pregnant patient's life or if rape and incest survivors present a police report verifying the crime before the second trimester of pregnancy.

In July, attorney **Lourdes Matsumoto**, the **Northwest Abortion Access Fund** and the **Indigenous Idaho Alliance** — which all currently assist pregnant patients seeking legal abortion in neighboring states — sued **Idaho Attorney General Raúl Labrador**, alleging the law violates freedom of speech, the right to travel, and the right to freely associate.

In her decision to grant a temporary restraining order while the case proceeds, **U.S. Magistrate Judge Debora K. Grasham** partially agreed with plaintiffs and said the lawsuit is not about the right to an abortion, but about the rights to freedom of speech, expression, due process and parental rights. The judge also said the court does not recognize the right to intrastate travel or freedom of movement as a fundamental right.

"The state can, and Idaho does, criminalize certain conduct occurring in its own borders such as abortion, kidnapping, and human trafficking," Grasham said. **"What the state cannot do is craft a statute muzzling the speech and expressive activities of a particular viewpoint with which the state disagrees under the guise of parental rights**, as Idaho Code Section 18-623 does here."

Activists sue over Michigan amendment enshrining abortion rights



An anti-abortion protester holds up a sign at the Michigan March for Life outside the Michigan State Capitol on Nov. 8, 2023.

(Anna Liz Nichols/Michigan Advance)

One year after **Michigan** voters passed **Proposal 3** to codify abortion rights in their constitution, anti-abortion activists have filed a lawsuit in federal court to try to kill the new amendment, [Michigan Advance reported](#).

Proposal 3 struck down Michigan's 1931 ban on abortions and created additional protections for people seeking reproductive health care. Michigan was one of the first states where voters directly adopted an abortion-rights law after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. To protest the one-year anniversary of this event, more than 1,000 abortion opponents organized by **Right to Life of Michigan** rallied at the state Capitol Wednesday.

State Rep. Jaime Greene (R-Lapeer) addressed the crowd from the perspective of a rape survivor and mother to a child with a genetic disorder. "It has deepened my understanding of the importance of proper reverence for the human remains and fostered in mere respect for every individual," Greene said. "Whether they take their first breath, or have their life cut tragically short before birth, there is absolutely no excuse for abortion in the world of Jaime Greene."

State lawmakers and reproductive rights advocates condemned the anti-abortion lawsuit.

“As we saw last year in Michigan and again last night in Ohio: abortion is a winning issue,” said **Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan president Paula Thornton Grear**. “The Republican Party knows it, too, but rather than admit that they are dramatically out of step with American values and American voters, they resort to dirty tactics like these instead. This baseless lawsuit is nothing but a brazen political attempt to overturn the will of the people and impose dangerous anti-abortion policies on an electorate that doesn’t want them.”

Proposal to lower maternal deaths in Louisiana: More nurse midwives, and more money

Louisiana had the **fifth-highest maternal mortality in the country** between 2018 and 2021, with 39 pregnant parent deaths per 100,000 live births, the [Louisiana Illuminator reported](#). To help curb maternal deaths, a leading maternal mortality expert has suggested the state start **paying medical providers more money to deliver babies** (rather than discontinuing this service), and **increase the number of nurse midwives**.

Medicaid currently pays for about 60% of births in Louisiana, but the **reimbursement rates are half** of what private insurers offer.

“It is really hard for them to keep their doors open when they are not being paid to do so,” said **Dr. Veronica Gillispie-Bell** during Wednesday’s Nursing Maternal Mortality and Preterm Births Task Force meeting. The New Orleans gynecologist is the co-director of the state health department’s Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative and authored the state’s [2022 Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review report](#).

Gillispie-Bell testified that many hospitals lose money on their obstetrics services, a reality that is especially challenging for smaller facilities in rural areas. Republican Gov.-elect **Jeff Landry** and the state legislature will have the authority to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates next year, which would involve increasing health-care spending.

THE PULL *Commentary from Kansas*

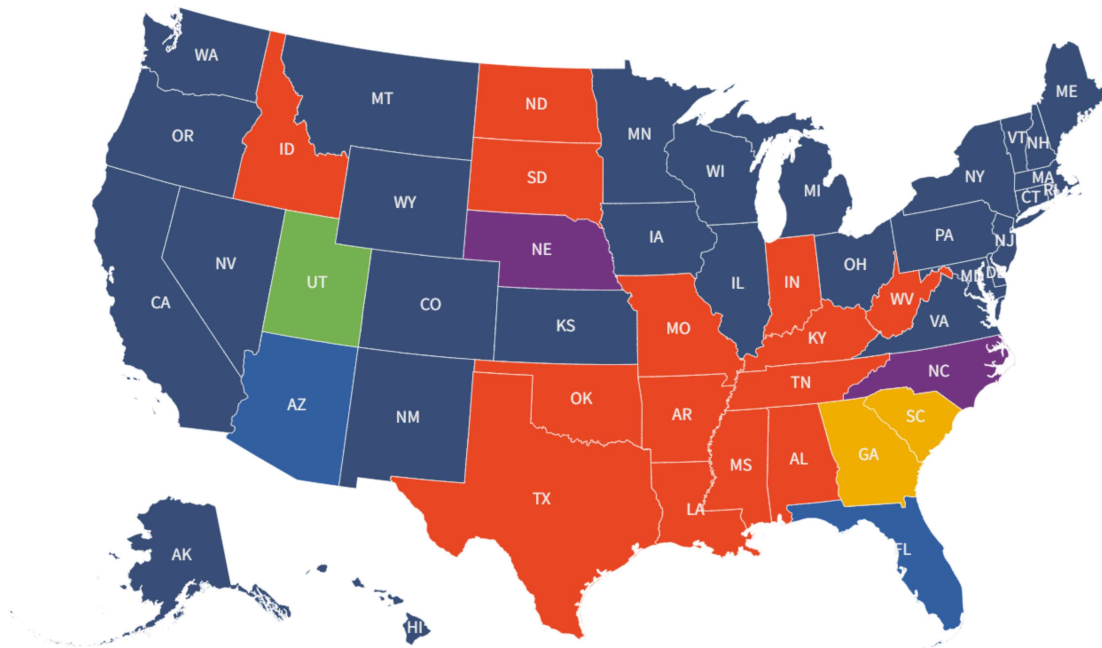
“Abortion-rights victories in red states don’t prove their deep, abiding love for Nancy Pelosi. They instead demonstrate that, when voters can separate the issue from candidates and culture wars, they support a long-established constitutional right.” — **Clay Wirestone**, opinion editor, [Kansas Reflector](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Iowa’s attorney general filed the state’s argument defending its six-week abortion ban, which has been blocked since July. ([Iowa Capital Dispatch](#))
- South Dakota voters could undo their state’s abortion ban in 2024; petition organizers are 75% of the way to their goal of 60,000 signatures. ([South Dakota Searchlight](#))

- Ohio Democrats tie 2024 GOP candidates to unpopular abortion stances after Issue 1 victory. ([Ohio Capital Journal](#))
- Beyond Pennsylvania’s high-profile state Supreme Court race centered on abortion rights, Democratic judicial candidates swept the lower courts, too. ([Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#))
- Virginia’s GOP bet on a 15-week abortion ban — and lost the legislature. ([Stateline / The 19th*](#))
- GenBioPro, maker of the generic version of the abortion drug mifepristone, is appealing a federal judge’s ruling in a lawsuit over West Virginia’s abortion ban. ([West Virginia Watch](#))

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



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