

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Ohio's House Speaker Jason Stephens dismissed a bid to obstruct Ohio's reproductive rights amendment. The Republican encouraged his party to focus on maternal and child health care but didn't rule out revisiting abortion issues in the future.*

*(Graham Stokes/Ohio Capital Journal)*

Nearly 57% of Ohio voters codified reproductive rights last week in a huge blow to opponents. Some Republican leaders are urging the party to move on, [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reports.

**House Speaker Jason Stephens rejected an effort to thwart Issue 1, the abortion rights amendment.** Stephens condemned Rep. Jennifer Gross' plan to introduce a measure geared toward giving the GOP-controlled Legislature the power over whether to implement Issue 1 and opening the window to impeach judges who try to do so.

**“This is Schoolhouse Rock type stuff,” Stephens said this week. “We need to make sure that we have the three branches of government and the constitution is what we abide by.”**

The Ohio speaker said the courts should be in charge of applying the new amendment. **He suggested legislators should focus on [improving pregnancy outcomes](#) in the Buckeye State, which has some of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the nation.**

“These are our people. These are our family members. These are people we care about,” Stephens said. “These are, whether it’s the moms, the babies, everybody — these families are extremely important, and yelling doesn’t accomplish that goal.”

Stephens also dismissed a repeal effort suggested by Senate President Matt Huffman on election night. “Putting that on the ballot after having two votes so quickly,” he said, “I think we all know what the result would be.”

**But the lower chamber leader also told Capital Journal he hasn’t ruled out the possibility of revisiting abortion policy in the future. Meanwhile, Minority Leader Allison Russo is on high alert for additional restrictions.** “We’ve seen the extremists in that caucus gain power and successfully put things forward,” she told the Capital Journal.

In fact, **Republican Sen. Sandra O’Brien introduced anti-abortion legislation on Tuesday.** Her bill would offer Ohioans [tax credits for donating to pregnancy crisis centers](#), which push abortion alternatives.

“As the pro-life movement makes the case for life, it is more important than ever to take concrete steps to support women and families facing an unexpected pregnancy,” O’Brien told the Senate Finance Committee this week. Reproductive rights advocates say [these centers spread misinformation](#) and sometimes lack medical professionals on staff.

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## **Nebraska abortion rights petition aims to revive fetal viability standard**

The group leading the effort to broaden abortion access in Nebraska plans to ask voters whether to guarantee the right through fetal viability and later in pregnancy to maintain a patient’s health. Ashlei Spivey of Protect Our Rights told the [Nebraska Examiner](#) the language reflects broad medical consensus and is in step with public sentiment in the state. “This amendment will ensure that these personal decisions stay with Nebraskans — not politicians,” Spivey said. The coalition will need some 120,000 petition signatures from registered voters, among other state requirements.

**Protect Our Rights aims to revive the right to an abortion through viability** — when a fetus can survive outside the womb — set by the U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. In 2010, Nebraska became the first state to ban abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy, according to [Associated Press](#). A bid to outlaw abortion after six weeks fell one

vote short during the last legislative session. But conservative lawmakers in the unicameral statehouse passed a 12-week ban this spring by combining the legislation with gender-affirming care restrictions for minors.

**Nebraska’s abortion rights opponents are framing the proposed abortion rights measure as an attack on parental rights**, even though the ballot language doesn’t mention that issue. “Under this extreme amendment, a girl who is not old enough to get her ears pierced or get a tattoo on her own will be able to obtain an abortion without a parent ever knowing,” said Karen Bowling, Nebraska Family Alliance’s executive director.

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## U.S. Senate moves to skirt Tuberville’s blockade of military nominees



*More than 300 signs bearing names, ranks and photos of each military nomination stalled by U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville dotted the lawn outside the U.S. Senate in September. The Alabama Republican refuses to add his vote to unanimous Senate approval in confirming the service members’ promotions, because he opposes the military’s reproductive health care rule.*

*(Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)*

A Democratic-led U.S. Senate committee approved a resolution this week that would [bypass Alabama Sen. Tommy Tuberville’s hold](#) on military promotions in objection to the Pentagon’s abortion policy, our Washington, D.C. bureau reports. **The resolution, proposed by Sen. Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat, would temporarily allow floor votes on large groups of military nominees instead of having to approve them individually.** It’s unclear

if Democrats can gain enough GOP votes to pass the resolution though. **Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said he doesn't support changing Senate rules to address the military promotions backlog.**

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Reed's resolution would fix the problem. "The idea of blocking the confirmation of military officers in order to make a political statement, no matter how deeply felt, has long been considered — long been considered — unthinkable," Schumer said this week. **Tuberville, a Republican, has held up what is typically unanimous, nonpartisan consent of military nominees since February.** He frames his disruption as a protest against the U.S. Department of Defense's reproductive health rule that reimburses service members who see abortions or related services elsewhere when they're restricted or unavailable where they're stationed.

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## **Pennsylvania House committee passes shield bill for out-of-state patients**

The state House Judiciary committee advanced a measure this week that would bar the courts from cooperating with other states' investigations of people who violated their abortion laws, [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#) reports. Democratic Rep. Melissa Shusterman, the bill's cosponsor, said the legislation would also prevent the judiciary from assisting out-of-state cases involving other reproductive health care services. **After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022, then-Gov. Tom Wolf signed an executive order protecting people from other states seeking abortions in Pennsylvania.** A spokesperson for Shusterman said the bill would strengthen Wolf's executive order by codifying the safeguards.

Republican Rep. Kate Klunk questioned the legislation's intent. "I have major concerns with this, especially since we could have individuals living in the state of Pennsylvania who are the victims of a botched vasectomy or a botched hysterectomy," Klunk said. "And they will not be able to receive redress from a wrong and a harm that was made to them based on the doctor that may have performed that out of state." But Democratic Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta dismissed Klunk's skepticism, saying that **the bill's purpose is to protect people who cannot access abortion where they live.** "I hope they know that it's legal and it's safe here in Pennsylvania," Kenyatta said.

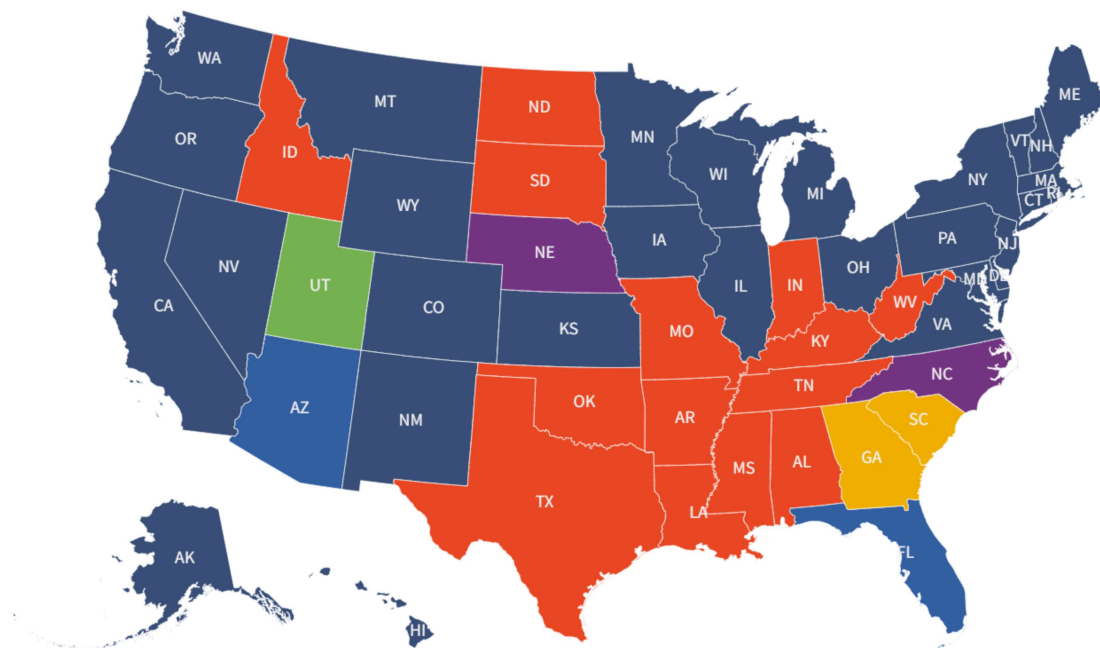
**THE PULL** *Commentary from Colorado*

"Events on last Tuesday suggest that if abortion rights claim voter attention in Colorado next November the results will be catastrophic for an already disintegrating state GOP." — **Quentin Young**, editor, [Colorado Newsline](#)

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

- Oklahoma’s Supreme Court put a temporary block on three abortion restrictions, including an ultrasound requirement three days before dispensing abortion pills, while the judiciary considers the case. ([Associated Press](#))
- New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy announced her bid for Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez’s seat, touting the state’s strides on maternal and infant health outcomes. ([New Jersey Monitor](#))
- Louisiana Governor-elect Jeff Landry lobbied a commission to withhold funding from the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board last year because the city’s district attorney said he would not prosecute abortion cases. ([Essence](#))
- A Catholic hospital is suing California patients who allegedly refused to be discharged by using a law intended to prevent anti-abortion protesters from blocking clinic entrances. ([KFF Health News](#))
- The Russian performance art collective Pussy Riot protested in front of the Indiana Supreme Court building this week. ([The Guardian](#))

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



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