

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley spoke at the Family Leader Presidential Thanksgiving Forum in Des Moines on Nov. 17, 2023. (Robin Opsahl/Iowa Capital Dispatch)*

Looking to shore up support from Iowa evangelicals ahead of the 2024 caucus, three Republican presidential candidates shared why they oppose abortion during the Family Leader's Presidential Thanksgiving Forum on Friday night, [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#) reports. The trio also shared their family stories when talking about their anti-abortion rights stances. **Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley said she had trouble conceiving, while Florida**

**Gov. Ron DeSantis and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy said their wives experienced pregnancy loss.**

Family Leader President and CEO Bob Vander Plaats asked Haley to explain her statements on abortion during debates. She doubled down on her previous comments encouraging a “consensus” on the issue, saying Republicans don’t have enough votes to pass a national ban and encouraging “respect instead of division” on abortion. The former South Carolina governor said the GOP should focus on supporting mothers, pushing adoption and banning abortions later in pregnancy, which are rare. **Abortions after 21 weeks represented 1% of all abortions** in the U.S., according to a 2019 [KFF](#) report.

**Haley also said the party could enact laws preventing women who get abortions from facing prosecution.** Nevada is the only state with a statute on the books punishing people for self-managing their abortions, according to [IfWhenHow](#), a reproductive justice organization. Despite laws against abortion criminalization, at least 61 people were investigated or arrested for having an abortion or helping someone get one between 2000 to 2020, a [recent report](#) found.

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## **Missouri advocates diverge on reproductive rights ballot measures**

Advocates have launched two citizen-led initiatives to restore some abortion access, but they’re split on which effort to support and what ballot language to use, [Missouri Independent](#) reports. **Variations of a petition filed in August by GOP operative Jamie Corley aims to add rape and incest exceptions to the state’s near-total ban, allow abortions in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and protect people who get abortions from prosecution.**

“When you present voters with a reasonable plan on abortion, they’re going to vote in favor of the reasonable plan,” Corley said, “especially when the alternative is a complete ban, no exceptions for rape and incest. And I think Ohio proved that can happen even in a very red state.” But Abortion Action Missouri executive director Mallory Schwarz is skeptical of Corley, calling her campaign “misleading.” Schwarz said “all these measures will do is help reelect the same politicians who banned abortion in Missouri in the first place.”

**Meanwhile, Missourians for Constitutional Freedom — the group behind a competing petition seeking to legalize abortion through fetal viability — has not decided which of the 11 versions filed in March by St. Louis physician Anna Fitz-James should ultimately be used for signature-gathering.**

Both sets of petitions are caught up in court cases with Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft over ballot summaries.

**Planned Parenthood has not endorsed either.** Vanessa Wellbery, vice president of policy and advocacy at Advocates of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis region and Southwest

Missouri, said abortion rights supporters should make sure the petition they back provides “meaningful access” for marginalized communities beyond restoring the precedent set by *Roe v. Wade*. And Alison Dreith, a former executive for NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri who now heads the Midwest Access Coalition, told the Independent that advocates should expect pushback from Republicans should either ballot measure pass.

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## Michigan abortion rights reform nearing finish line



*Gov. Gretchen Whitmer pushed lawmakers to repeal 24-hour waiting periods on abortion and expand Medicaid coverage of abortion care. But a Democratic representative’s criticism and a slim legislative majority led a watered-down Reproductive Health Act to land on Whitmer’s desk. (Andrew Roth/Michigan Advance)*

The Democrat-controlled Legislature passed some reproductive rights measures this fall, while others remain in limbo, [Michigan Advance](#) reports. **Lawmakers advanced a package that removes some regulations on clinics and repeals a separate insurance rider requirement for abortions stemming from sexual assault.** But the Reproductive Health Act passed only after several provisions were cut. Rep. Karen Whitsett, a Detroit Democrat, said she wouldn’t vote for the package if it allowed Medicaid to cover all abortions. Another part of the law that would have eliminated the 24-hour waiting period for abortions didn’t make the final draft, which is awaiting Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s signature. She’s expected to sign the package into law today, according to a spokesperson.

Legislators could advance several reproductive rights measures next year. For instance, one proposal aims to update the state’s surrogacy laws. Michigan is the only state in the nation that bans surrogacy contracts — the statute carries criminal penalties of at least one year in prison and a \$10,000 fine. **Democratic Rep. Samantha Steckloff sponsored legislation**

that would standardize contracts and require consent for surrogates and parents. The House passed the [bill](#) earlier this month. Bills that would prosecute fertility doctors who used their own sperm without patient consent and remove statutes of limitations for sexual assault charges have yet to reach the state Senate.

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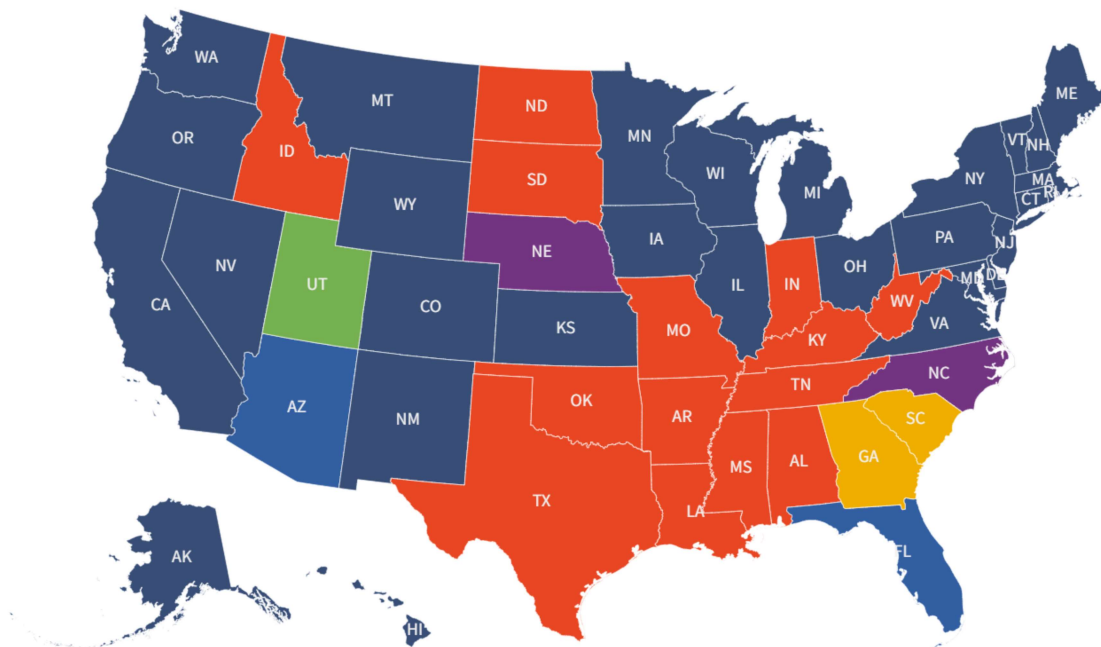
**THE PULL** *Commentary from Michigan*

“The message from conservatives is clear: Voters just can’t be trusted to make decisions on abortion. That’s something to keep in mind the next time you hear Republicans insist that they’d never, ever ram through a national abortion ban if they control the White House and both houses of Congress in 2025.” — **Susan J. Demas**, editor-in-chief, [Michigan Advance](#)

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

- Reproductive Freedom for All, formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America, endorsed Maryland Democrat Angela Alsobrooks in the race for a U.S. Senate seat. ([Maryland Matters](#))
- California Gov. Gavin Newsom debuted an ad criticizing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for approving a six-week abortion ban earlier this year. ([Politico](#))
- The Biden administration has created a “birthing friendly” designation for hospitals that participate in maternal health quality collaboratives and provide evidence-based care. ([KFF Health News](#))

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



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