

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Elisha Brown



A provision in a proposed Missouri abortion rights ballot measure would require rape victims to report their abuse to a hotline.

(Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

A Republican-led campaign to restore abortion access is facing criticism from advocates who support survivors of sexual assault over a requirement to report a rape to a hotline, [Missouri Independent](#) reports.

A ballot petition filed in August by Jamie Corley, treasurer of the Missouri Women and Family Research Fund, would allow abortion through 12 weeks of pregnancy. Versions of the initiative would shield abortion seekers and providers from prosecution.

But **the proposed constitutional amendment would also require rape victims to report their assault to a crisis hotline**, which some survivors and advocates say could diminish access to care.

“If that’s what’s required, then I say yes, it’s better than telling someone ‘no, you can’t make this decision about your own body,’” Trish Mitchell, who once had an abortion after being raped, told the Independent. “But at the same time, I really wish they would talk with people who’ve had that experience and understand the amount of trauma that they actually go through before they even arrive at the decision to have an abortion.”

Corley said the reporting requirement was intended to give sexual abuse victims an outlet for care. She said the hotline report can be done confidentially, anonymously, via text, call or email. No one would be required to detail their assault, Corley said.

Still, victims and advocates are skeptical. “I’m very hesitant to ever say that a survivor should have to make a decision in order to qualify for another service,” said Matthew Huffman, a spokesman for the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Taylor Hirth, a rape survivor, said calling a crisis hotline wasn’t on her mind after being assaulted. “This requirement adds one more thing to the extensive to-do list that further traumatizes survivors of sexual violence when they are just trying to move on with their lives,” she said.

Missouri required some level of abortion reporting before enacting a near-total ban, Corley said. She emphasized that patient privacy is important, saying her proposal is not a “Trojan horse to get reporting requirements in place.”

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Ohio Catholic bishops spent nearly \$2 million in failed campaign against Issue 1



*Columbus Catholic Diocese Bishop Earl Fernandes leads a prayer to open the Ohio March for Life rally against November's Issue 1 reproductive rights amendment on Oct. 6, 2023.
(Graham Stokes/Ohio Capital Journal)*

Catholic leaders in Ohio poured \$1.7 million into failed efforts to defeat a reproductive rights ballot measure, according to a Catholics for Choice analysis of campaign finance expenditures. Bishops have been steadfast in their opposition to abortion, despite polls suggesting that the laity supports abortion rights, [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reports.

The Catholic dioceses of Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland contributed \$1.7 million to Protect Women Ohio, the group that opposed Issue 1, an abortion rights referendum that voters approved by a 57-43 margin this month. The Knights of Columbus, a fraternal organization, gave \$1 million. And the Concord Fund, affiliated with conservative Catholic and Federal Society co-chairman **Leonard Leo**, contributed \$9.7 million. Leo lobbied to appoint several U.S. Supreme Court justices who helped decide last year's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Ohio bishops' organized stance against the abortion rights amendment differs from widespread Catholic views on the issue. **Sixty-three percent of American Catholics believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases**, while 68% said *Roe* should be left alone, according to a [poll](#) conducted in May 2022.

Catholics for Choice President Jamie L. Manson said the clergy's anti-abortion sentiment reeks of hypocrisy: **Bishops say they care deeply about vulnerable populations, but the Catholic Church has paid billions to settle child sex-abuse claims.** In [some cases](#), bishops moved priests accused of child molestation to other places where they allegedly abused other boys. "When they say they're concerned about babies and families, it kind of

rings hollow when you consider what a destructive force they were in these coverups,” Manson said.

Florida reported highest number of abortions in 2021, CDC data shows

There were 625,978 reported abortions nationwide in 2021, the year before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, according to federal data. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the latest [abortion surveillance report](#) last week. Data was recorded from 46 states, the District of Columbia and New York City. Health agencies in California, Maryland, New Hampshire and New Jersey did not turn in abortion numbers to the CDC.

In 2021, **Florida** saw the highest number of abortions — 79,817 — followed by **New York** (63,487), **Texas** (51,860), **Illinois** (51,797) and **Georgia** (41,833). But the District of Columbia had the highest rate of abortions — 21.8 per 1,000 women ages 15-44. New York City (21), Illinois (20.8), Florida (20.3) and Georgia (18.8) also had some of the highest abortions rates in the country, [Florida Phoenix](#) reports.

Two years ago, women in their 20s had 57% of all recorded abortions, and 93.5% of pregnancy terminations occurred at 13 weeks’ gestation or less. Fifty-three percent of abortions that occurred at nine weeks’ gestation or earlier were medication abortions, and 37.6% of all abortions provided at 13 weeks’ gestation or earlier were surgical procedures. Overall, abortions increased by 5% from 2020 to 2021.

Woman sues Tennessee jail for ignoring labor pains, forcing her to give premature birth

A woman who went into labor last year while incarcerated is suing Tennessee jail staff, saying they berated her pleas for help and repeatedly denied medical care until her water broke. Plaintiff Genny Jones said officials’ actions forced her to give birth to a premature baby in the back of an ambulance, [Tennessee Lookout](#) reports.

In November 2022, Jones was living in Missouri and more than seven months pregnant when a bail bondsman arrested her on a years-old driving-under-the-influence charge, according to the complaint. She was taken to the Loudon County jail in Tennessee, where she told officers her pregnancy was high risk. State [law](#) requires that pregnant inmates receive adequate prenatal and postpartum care.

But Jones said a guard dismissed her pain when she began to experience labor symptoms and called her a “sick bitch” after she vomited. Jones said she begged for help for hours. After she received permission to use the bathroom, she saw blood and felt the

baby's head through her vaginal canal's opening. Besides giving her a dirty blanket, guards continued to curse at and ignore her until her water broke, per the lawsuit.

Her baby was born deaf in one ear and has limited hearing in the other. Jones filed a federal lawsuit against Loudon County jail officers this month, arguing they violated constitutional rights, subjecting her to cruel and unusual punishment along with breaking the equal protection clause. She's seeking monetary damages, payment for her daughter's medical expenses and mandatory training for jail staff.

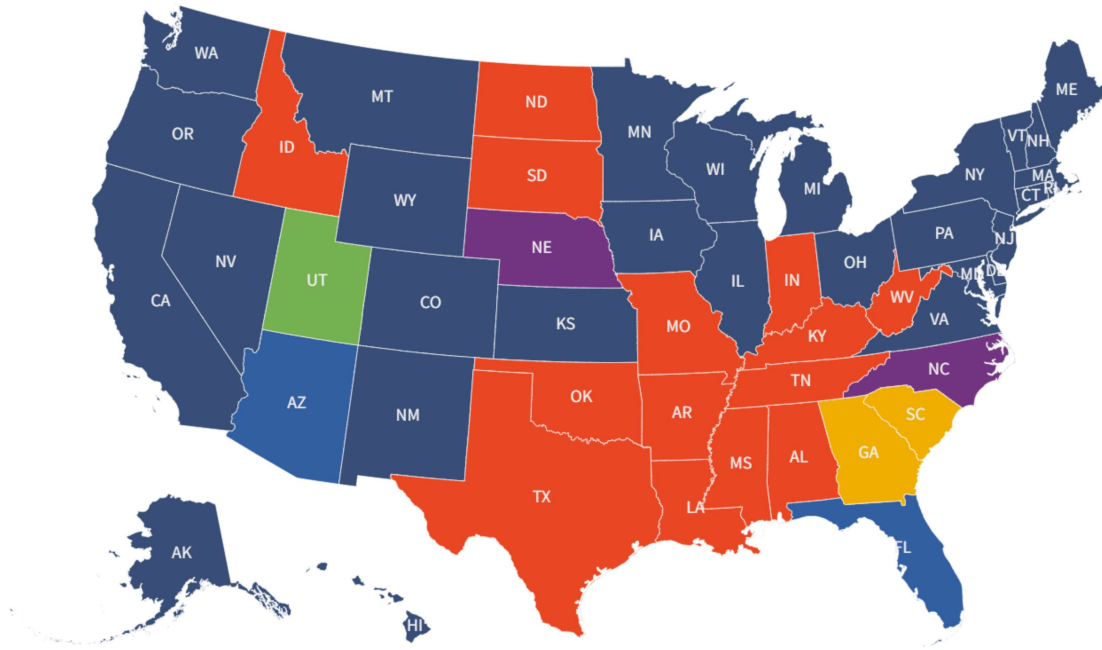
THE PULL *Commentary from Kentucky*

"Republicans ought to be worried about abortion. If Democratic state-legislative candidates can muster even a pale shadow of Gov. Andy Beshear's statewide support, they'd make a significant dent in the GOP supermajority." — **D. Stephen Voss**, political scientist, [Kentucky Lantern](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana submitted an abortion rights ballot initiative to the secretary of state's office last week. ([Montana Free Press](#))
- A Nevada judge rejected a bid to put a reproductive rights amendment on the ballot next year, concluding that the language violated the state's single-subject rule. ([Associated Press](#))
- The Texas Supreme Court is expected to hear a case Tuesday about pregnancy complication exceptions for the state's abortion bans. ([NPR](#))
- Births increased by an average of 2.3% this year in states with bans compared to states where abortion is legal, according to a new analysis. ([The New York Times](#))
- Rutgers University researchers found a link between in-utero exposure to certain pollutants and male reproductive health problems. ([The Guardian](#))

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



Open this interactive map in your browser

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