

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Elisha Brown



New Yorkers and Marylanders will vote on abortion rights measures this year. Citizens initiatives are underway in nine other states.
(Getty Images)

Happy New Year — I hope you enjoyed the holidays.

With the general election in November, abortion rights are set to be directly on the ballot in [Maryland](#) and [New York](#) after Democratic-controlled legislatures approved those measures.

Citizen-led efforts to put the issue before voters also are underway in nearly a dozen states. Here's a States Newsroom rundown of reproductive rights ballot petitions:

- [Arkansas](#) — The state bans all abortions except to save a person's life in the case of a medical emergency. A ballot committee submitted an updated proposal to the attorney general's office last month. The petition would allow abortion up to 18 weeks of fertilization and beyond in cases of rape, incest, fatal fetal anomalies or to protect the patient's life or physical health.

Supporters must collect roughly 91,000 signatures by July 5 if the attorney general approves the revisions.

- [Arizona](#) — Reproductive rights advocates launched a campaign for the Arizona Abortion Access Act in September. The initiative would restore abortion rights in the state, which has a 15-week ban, through fetal viability.

But abortions would be permitted later in pregnancy based on a doctor's judgment to preserve the patient's life or their physical or mental health. Supporters need about 384,000 signatures by July.

- [Colorado](#) — Abortion is legal throughout pregnancy in Colorado, but a reproductive rights coalition wants to remove a decades-old ban on public funds being used for abortions. Government employees' insurance does not cover abortion care.

The state Title Board set titles for two versions of the initiative in October; officials also rejected a petition that sought to ban abortion. Petitioners need signatures from 2% of voters — about 125,000 people — in each of the 35 Senate districts in order to make the ballot.

- [Florida](#) — Whether abortion makes the 2024 ballot in Florida lies in the hands of the state Supreme Court, which has the power to reject petitions. Floridians Protecting Freedom have collected 1.4 million signatures and submitted most of those to election officials for verification. The group's initiative would bar government interference in abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health.

Republican Attorney General Ashley Moody has fought the measure, calling the language vague. The state has a 15-week ban, though a six-week ban could take effect 30 days after the high court issues a key ruling.

- [Missouri](#) — Abortion is only permitted for a medical emergency. Two citizen-led efforts seek to change that. Missourians for Constitutional Freedom filed 11 versions of an abortion petition in March. Most of them would restore abortion access up to viability or later if the patient's life is at risk.

A proposal from Jamie Corley, treasurer of the Missouri Women and Family Research Fund, would enact a 12-week ban, shield providers and patients from prosecution and allow abuse victims to get abortions if they report the crime to a crisis hotline.

Both need 120,000 petition signatures by July — only Corley's team has started that process — but supporters have faced pushback from Republican officials.

- [Montana](#) — Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana submitted a ballot initiative in November that could safeguard abortion rights. A 1999 state Supreme Court ruling solidified abortion rights based on privacy, but a group spokesperson said a constitutional amendment would make that protection explicit.

To make the ballot, the petition must be reviewed by the attorney general's office and receive signatures from at least 10% of registered voters. An anti-abortion ballot measure failed in November 2022.

- [Nebraska](#) — A group called Protect Our Rights initiated an abortion rights amendment campaign in November. The measure would allow abortion through viability.

The state has a 12-week gestational limit that the legislature enacted last year. Proponents will need 120,000 signatures from registered voters by July, among other requirements.

- [Nevada](#) — In 1990, Nevada voters secured the right to an abortion through 24 weeks of pregnancy or later if the mother's life is at risk. Reproductive rights advocates tried to expand that protection to an unlimited right to abortion, childbirth, birth control, fertility care, miscarriage management, tubal ligation and all aspects of prenatal and postpartum health care.

However, [a judge struck down the effort in November](#), saying the language was too broad and misleading. The group went back to the drawing board last month, submitting a [truncated version](#) to the secretary of state.

- [South Dakota](#) — A proposal backed by Dakotans for Health would allow abortions up to 12 weeks of pregnancy but let the legislature restrict the procedure in the second and third trimester. South Dakota bans all abortions unless it's necessary to save a patient's life.

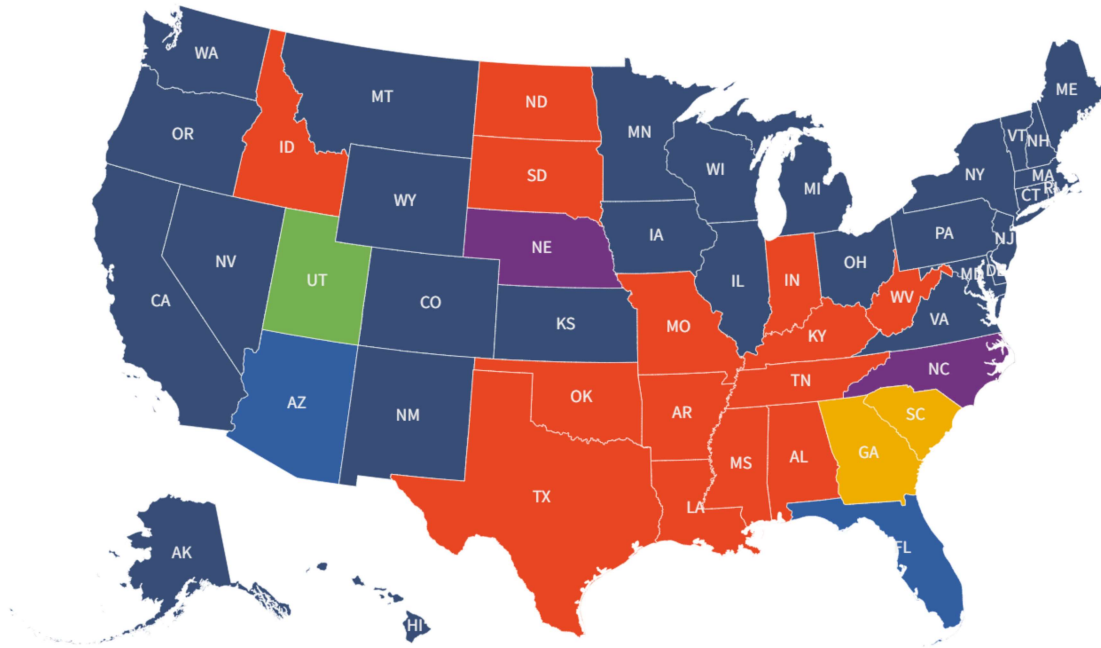
The campaign has already collected 50,000 signatures for the measure, exceeding the roughly 35,000 needed to make the ballot. National and local reproductive rights have criticized the initiative's scope.

While Democratic lawmakers in [Pennsylvania](#) and [Virginia](#) have proposed resolutions to protect abortion access, state rules require legislatures to approve ballot measures twice in consecutive sessions. That means abortion won't be directly on the ballot in those commonwealths until 2025 at the earliest.

THE PULL *Commentary from Ohio*

"Many other women in Gilead GOP dystopias will have their futures decided for them by the state. Ohio voters recoiled at the inevitability and overwhelmingly enshrined abortion rights in the state constitution. But what happened in Texas could go nationwide if MAGA zealots, who endorse a federal abortion ban with illusory exceptions, win big in 2024." — **Marilou Johaneck**, contributor, [Ohio Capital Journal](#)

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, and follow her on Twitter [@elishacbrown](#).

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