

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Missouri Right to Life asked lawmakers to remove Planned Parenthood as a Medicaid provider.
(Rudi Keller/Missouri Independent)*

The abortion rights group behind an effort to restore access in Missouri, where most abortions are illegal, officially launched a signature-gathering campaign on Thursday.

Missourians for Constitutional Freedom, which is seeking to put an abortion question on the November ballot, filed nearly a dozen versions of an initiative petition last spring.

But the coalition was embroiled in lawsuits with Republican officials and infighting over ballot language for most of 2023, [Missouri Independent](#) reports. Now, **the group said it will need about \$5 million to back their goals and collect nearly 200,000 valid signatures by May 5.**

Coalition members settled on petition language that would allow lawmakers to regulate abortion after viability — when a fetus is able to survive outside the uterus. The proposed constitutional amendment would allow doctors to provide abortions “in good faith judgment” later in pregnancy to protect a patient’s life, along with their physical or mental health.

Still at play is a dueling petition backed by GOP operative Jamie Corley that could enact a 12-week ban in the state and add exceptions for rape and incest. Corley’s team started gathering signatures two months ago.

Anti-abortion groups recently created their own political action committee to quell support for both initiatives. Missouri Stands with Women was launched last week to “push back against the Big Abortion Industry.” Veteran anti-abortion activist Sam Lee is the president of the PAC.

Meanwhile, Democratic and Republican legislators appear to be frustrated with Missouri Right to Life. The group wants lawmakers to defund Planned Parenthood by adding anti-abortion language to a medical provider tax, the [Independent](#) reports.

A Democrat cursed during a state Senate hearing for the tax on Wednesday, and Republicans scolded Right to Life for trying to derail health care policy. **At issue is the tax, or federal reimbursement allowance, which gives providers some \$4 billion in direct and matching funds.**

In recent years, GOP lawmakers have tried to cut public funding for Planned Parenthood, a reproductive health organization that provides services beyond abortion. But the state Supreme Court ruled that the move was unconstitutional.

Missouri Right to Life executive director Susan Klein pleaded with lawmakers to include language in the medical tax policy that would remove Planned Parenthood’s status as a Medicaid provider.

Republicans like state Sen. Sandy Crawford grew exasperated with Klein’s request. “Your thinking is flawed and you’re picking on 25,000 Missourians and you’re putting them at risk over abortions that are not even happening in the state of Missouri,” Crawford said.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Kentucky Republican introduces maternal health ‘momnibus’ legislation



*Rep. Kim Moser, a Kentucky Republican and former neonatal nurse, is sponsoring bills that could offer new mothers therapy and widen a home-nurse program.
(Courtesy of Kentucky House Republicans)*

A bipartisan group of women lawmakers in Kentucky met last summer to discuss how to improve maternal and child health outcomes in the commonwealth, which **bans most abortions and has a high pregnancy-related death rate**. Republican Rep. Kim Moser said the idea for a maternal health “momnibus” package stemmed from that meeting, [Kentucky Lantern](#) reports. Moser introduced a slate of bills Wednesday that would help expectant mothers before, during and after childbirth.

The legislation would add pregnancy to qualifying life events for health insurance coverage, provide mental health counseling, and expand a home-nurse program for new and expecting parents. Other provisions would maintain a council that will work to improve data collection and suggest policy recommendations. “Addressing Kentucky’s high maternal mortality rate and saving mothers and babies is obviously a priority for all of us,” said Moser, a mother of five and former neonatal intensive care nurse.

Wisconsin Democrats urge Republican House leader to bring postpartum Medicaid vote

Just a handful of states have yet to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage from two months to a year, according to [KFF](#). Wisconsin is one of the holdouts: The Republican Assembly leader is stalling the expansion. Democratic lawmakers and maternal health advocates urged Speaker Robin Vos to bring a bill to the floor that would expand Medicaid for new moms from

60 days to 12 months, [Wisconsin Examiner](#) reports. **The measure passed the state Senate by a 32-1 vote in September.** Leaders applied for a waiver two years ago that would extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 90 days, but federal approval is still pending.

Dr. Kristin Lyerly, a Green Bay OB-GYN, called for the bill's passage this week. "It takes a full year to recover from a pregnancy, and for women with complicated pregnancies, it can take even longer and require numerous interactions with the health care system," Lyerly said. Sen. LaTonya Johnson, a Milwaukee Democrat, said **extending postpartum Medicaid could address mental health complications that new mothers experience and combat racial disparities.** The maternal mortality rate for Black Wisconsinites was [five times higher](#) than that of white mothers from 2006 to 2010, according to state data.

Connecticut hospitals deny labor and delivery ward closure

Health officials in Connecticut rejected a health care system's request to close a Stafford hospital's maternity ward, [CT Mirror](#) reports. The Office of Health Strategy said Trinity Health of New England's **Johnson Memorial Hospital didn't adequately explain how the ward's closure would improve quality of care in the region.** Hospital administrators said Johnson Memorial stopped delivering babies in 2020, citing recruitment issues and financial problems as reasons for shutting down the ward. Trinity Health has less than two weeks to appeal the outcome.

"This decision is good news for the residents of our district," Republican state Sen. Jeff Gordon said Wednesday. "Expectant mothers, and families, rely on Johnson Memorial's maternal care because of its accessibility in our rural area and its quality." **The Stafford hospital is one of three in Connecticut that have moved to end labor and delivery services.** Last month, the state approved Windham Hospital's request to permanently stop delivering babies after initially denying the proposal.

Meanwhile, a **first-in-the nation "baby bonds" experiment is underway in Connecticut.** Nearly 8,000 babies were born to mothers who receive Medicaid health insurance during the second half of 2023. **The state is saving \$3,200 for them in a trust that could grow to at least \$11,000 by the time they're 18 and allowed to touch the money.** Officials provided [updates](#) on the program — geared at reducing the racial wealth gap and generational poverty — this week. Most of the state's municipalities have infants eligible for the bond. "You want to build wealth in this society, nothing is more important than freeing yourself from debt and then [achieving] ownership," said Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont.

THE PULL *Commentary from Michigan*

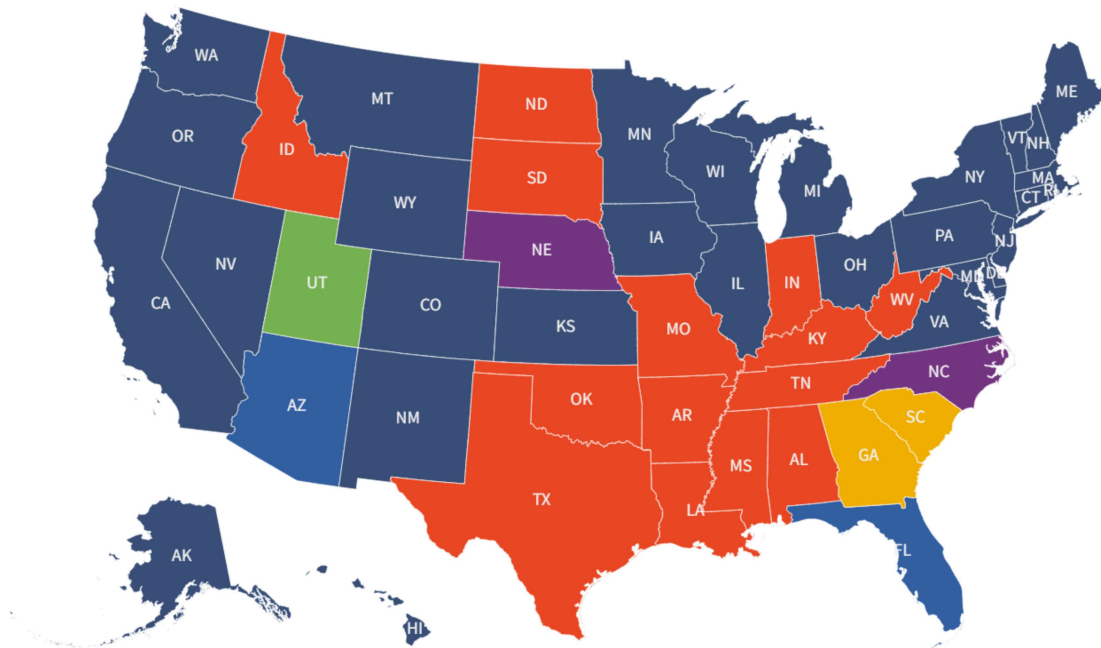
"Nine states have now made the humane decision to pay for free breakfast and lunch for students: California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New

Mexico and Vermont. (Abortion is legal in all of these states, by the way).” — **Susan J. Demas**, editor-in-chief, [Michigan Advance](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- The March for Life rally in Washington, D.C. aims to shore up support for anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers and maternity homes. ([Associated Press](#))
- Alaska’s GOP lawmakers have introduced several anti-abortion measures this year. ([Alaska Beacon](#))
- Montana’s Republican attorney general rejected a proposed abortion rights ballot initiative, saying the language contained multiple subjects and it would limit the state’s ability to protect the public. ([Montana Free Press](#))
- Pregnant migrants in their third trimester and women with newborns can stay in New York City shelters until their babies turn six months old. ([The City](#))
- A federal judge heard arguments in a North Carolina case over the state’s mifepristone regulations. ([Courthouse News](#))
- City council members in Amarillo, Texas are skeptical of an abortion travel ban proposal. ([Texas Tribune](#))

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



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