

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds pledged to help new mothers at the Prayer Rally for Life on Jan. 22, 2024.  
(Robin Opsahl/Iowa Capital Dispatch)*

Republican leaders in Iowa marked the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade by hailing the anti-abortion legislation they passed last year.

Gov. Kim Reynolds and Attorney General Brenna Bird spoke at the Prayer Rally for Life about the six-week ban approved during a special session in July, [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#) reports. **The ban was temporarily blocked by the courts just three days after Reynolds signed the bill into law.**

Reynolds and Bird said they remain committed to defending their abortion policy. “We’re working hard and pushing through,” Bird said. “Because we know that every single day matters when we’re talking about innocent human lives, about a baby’s heartbeat in the womb.”

Briefs are due to the Iowa Supreme Court by the end of this month, and oral arguments are set to begin in the spring. The attorney general told the crowd Monday that she expects the court to issue a decision in June.

For her part, Reynolds said she will “never back down from protecting the innocent and unborn.” She also plans to push for postpartum Medicaid expansion this year. **Iowa is one of the few states that hasn’t expanded Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months,** according to [KFF](#).

She also touted her “Thrive Iowa” initiative, which works to connect people with nonprofits, churches and businesses to help get them off government assistance programs. It is modeled after a similar effort in Florida.

For now, **abortion is legal up to 20 weeks of pregnancy** in the state.

**THE BEAT** States Newsroom coverage

## Colorado coalition launches campaign to codify abortion rights



*Bianka Emerson, Colorado Black Women for Political Action president, speaks during a kickoff event for a proposed abortion rights constitutional amendment.*

*(Sara Wilson/Colorado Newsline)*

Reproductive health advocates launched their effort to remove Colorado’s decades-old ban on taxpayer-funded abortions on the 51st anniversary of Roe. **The Democratic-led state already passed a law protecting abortion rights two years ago, but a ballot initiative**

**could secure the right in the Colorado Constitution.** Supporters of the petition must collect roughly 125,000 signatures by the end of April to make the November ballot, [Colorado Newslines](#) reports.

“We will make sure that the fabric of this state, the constitution on which it was built, the document that validates us as a state, guarantees a woman’s right to protect her health,” said Bianka Emerson, the president of Colorado Black Women for Political Action.

**In 1984, a referendum that outlawed the use of public funds for abortion passed with 50.4% of the vote.** State government employees cannot use their health insurance for abortion care; the potential ballot measure would remove that barrier.

**Anti-abortion groups are circulating their own [petition](#) that would enact a ban if approved by voters.** Backers of that campaign already started collecting signatures. Newsline reports that Colorado voters have rejected abortion restrictions four times since 2008.

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## Florida Supreme Court has yet to decide fate of abortion access



*The Florida Supreme Court comprises justices appointed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, a strident abortion opponent.  
(Courtesy of the Florida Supreme Court)*

Florida’s top court heard arguments four months ago in a lawsuit challenging the 15-week abortion ban’s constitutionality after providers sued the state, saying the law violated a state privacy clause voters approved in 1980. But the Florida Supreme Court has not issued a ruling. **The court typically releases opinions on Thursday mornings,** [Florida Phoenix](#) reports. Bob Jarvis, Nova Southeastern University constitutional law professor, warned



against drawing any conclusions. “There is no rhyme or reason that outsiders can detect,” Jarvis said.

Still, **Democratic Rep. Anna Eskamani said she believes the justices were waiting on the Iowa Caucuses to take place** before releasing a decision. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis [dropped out of the presidential race](#) Sunday after losing Iowa to former President Donald Trump by nearly 30 percentage points.

One abortion issue is already on the docket: On Feb. 7, **the Florida Supreme Court will review an abortion rights petition seeking to make the November ballot**. Floridians Protecting Freedom has collected over 1 million signatures for the effort. The group wants voters to guarantee access through fetal viability or later in pregnancy to preserve patient health. **GOP Attorney General Ashley Moody is pressing the court to dismiss the proposal**, arguing its language is vague.

**Some petition supporters remain optimistic that the court, the majority of whom were appointed by DeSantis, will rule in their favor.** “They have very limited authority on how they can approve the language,” Democratic Sen. Tina Polsky said at a press conference on Monday. “I feel confident that this language that has been so carefully crafted and has been passed in other states is neither vague nor multiple subject,” she said.

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## Maine House lawmakers hold hearing for reproductive rights resolution



*The Maine House held a public hearing for an abortion proposal on Jan. 22, the 51st anniversary of Roe.*

*(Emma Davis/Maine Morning Star)*

Reproductive rights supporters and opponents packed the halls of the Maine State House on Monday to weigh in on a proposed constitutional amendment that could put abortion on the ballot this fall. Recent statutes legalized abortion after 24 weeks of pregnancy for medical emergencies and eliminated abortion copays, [Maine Morning Star](#) reports.

But the [resolution](#) proposed by **Senate Majority Leader Eloise Vitelli** this month would go further by adding “reproductive autonomy” rights in the state constitution. There would be exceptions for lawmakers to restrict abortion when justified by “a compelling state interest,” but Vitelli hasn’t provided details.

The hearing for the proposal lasted about five hours, according to the Morning Star. One mother, in support of the measure, testified she wanted a child but had to get an abortion after receiving a cancer diagnosis. A son said his mother had an abortion at 16, which gave her the freedom to have him later in life.

**People who opposed the resolution said the bill contains vague language and questioned why it doesn’t include the word abortion or mention sex.** Republican Rep. Rachel Henderson asked how the proposed constitutional amendment would affect men, arguing that they have rights to fetuses, too. In Maine, Democrats hold most power, but two-thirds of the legislature has to approve a resolution before voters can decide on the measure. GOP lawmakers would have to endorse Vitelli’s proposal for it to advance.

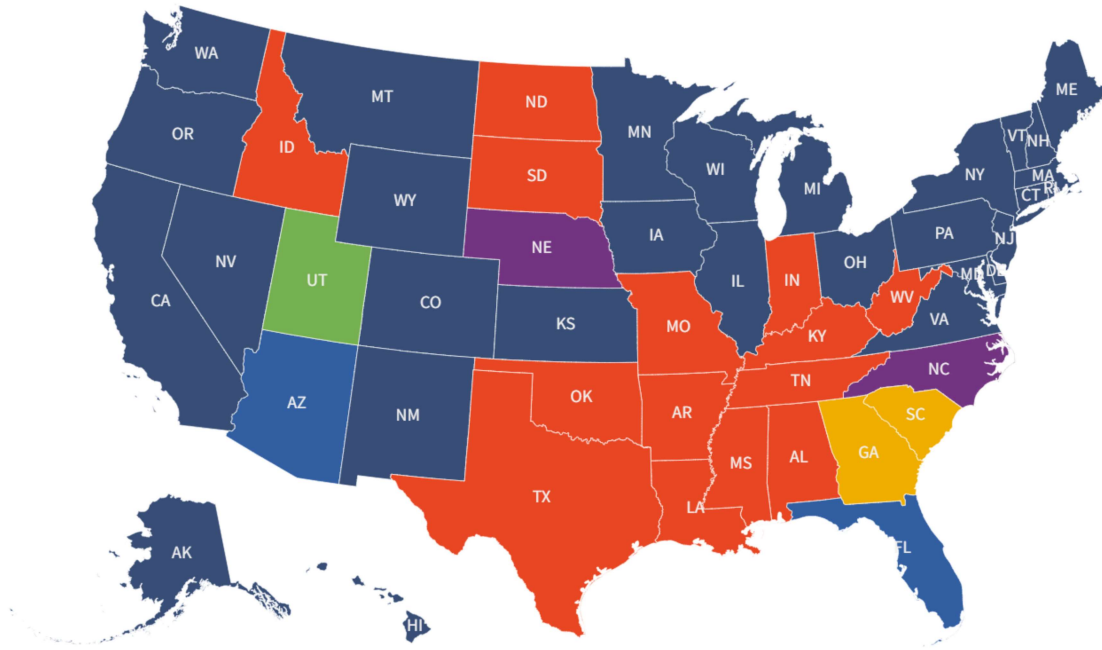
#### **THE PULL** *Commentary from Wisconsin*

“Access to contraception in Wisconsin is paramount for reproductive health and autonomy. It enables informed health and life decisions. Securing this right is crucial for the well-being of both individuals and communities.” — **Dr. Kristin Lyerly**, Green Bay-based OB/GYN, [Wisconsin Examiner](#)

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

- Indiana health officials will no longer release individual pregnancy termination reports, citing the need to shield patient privacy. ([Indiana Capital Chronicle](#))
- North Carolina Democrats discussed the state’s abortion restrictions to mark Monday’s Roe anniversary. ([NC Newsline](#))
- Three Republicans vying for their party’s U.S. Senate seat nomination advocated for a federal abortion ban during a debate this week. ([Ohio Capital Journal](#))
- Democratic Pennsylvania lawmakers emphasized the importance of voting for candidates who support abortion rights. ([Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#))

#### **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](mailto:ebrown@statesnewsroom.com), and follow her on X [@elishacbrown](#).

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