

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Allie Phillips testifies before the U.S. Senate Budget Committee about her experiences with Tennessee's abortion laws during a hearing on Feb. 28, 2024.
(Screenshot from committee webcast)*

U.S. senators heard testimony Wednesday on the economic effects of abortion bans, [States Newsroom](#) reported.

Allie Phillips, a Tennessee woman who had to get an abortion in New York City after her fetus received a severe diagnosis in fall 2022, spoke to the Senate Budget Committee about her plight.

“Knowing I had a daughter to live for, we made the difficult decision to seek an abortion,” Phillips said. She testified that **she had to raise money on Go Fund Me to help with travel costs.**

Now a Democratic candidate running for legislative office in Tennessee, Phillips and her husband want to expand their family. But they fear pregnancy complications could lead them to once again navigate the state's abortion laws, which allow termination in few circumstances.

Academics spoke about the financial ramifications of abortion restrictions. Middlebury College economics professor Caitlin Myers told lawmakers that embarking upon motherhood “is the single largest economic decision many women will make in their lifetimes.”

She noted that women's earnings decline by about [30%](#) when they become mothers. Myers, a mother of four, said the decision to become a parent was “entirely worth it for her,” but that may not be the case for everyone.

“But that's the point — the trade-offs and decisions about whether and when to become a parent are inherently personal and closely tied to our economic lives,” Myers said. “And even the best laid plans of mice and men — and let's add women — can commonly go awry.”

Leslie Ford, an adjunct fellow at the conservative-leaning think tank American Enterprise Institute, said abortion is not a solution.

Ford said lawmakers should instead **overhaul safety net programs** for low-income women. She argued that social welfare initiatives trap “people in poverty by discouraging both work and marriage.”

Tamra Call, the executive director of Obria Medical Clinic, an **anti-abortion center** based in Iowa, said her staff encourages patients to pursue alternatives. Call said they refer people to the Women, Infants and Children, or WIC program, Medicaid and other resources.

“A woman should never feel that abortion is her only option,” she said.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Most Alabama judicial candidates mum on state Supreme Court IVF ruling



Hundreds of people gathered at a rally in support of IVF access in Montgomery, Alabama on Feb. 28, 2024. The state Senate advanced protective bills this week. (Brian Lyman/Alabama Reflector)

A majority opinion from the Alabama Supreme Court [ruling](#) that frozen embryos are “children” has ignited an uproar in the state and around the nation. But few judicial candidates set to appear on the state primary ballot Tuesday commented on the decision, [Alabama Reflector](#) reported.

Chris McCool, an associate justice for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, and Sarah Stewart, a Republican associate state Supreme Court justice running for chief justice, said **commenting on the IVF ruling could violate judicial ethics codes.**

Northwestern University emeritus law professor Steven Lubet told the Reflector professional guidelines typically prevent the judiciary from discussing “disputed legal issues” when running for office. But Lubet noted that a **2002 U.S. Supreme Court ruling** determined “in elections, the First Amendment gives voters the right to know what the candidates stand for.”

Stewart, who joined the [majority opinion](#) in the IVF ruling, said in an email that the “case is not final,” which would prevent her from talking about the decision. **Either party could file to have the case reheard**, she said. McCool was also cautious but mentioned that judges should follow the law. “We don’t need outcome-based decision making at any level, but especially at the supreme court level. The only allegiance the Supreme Court should have is to whatever the law is.”

The most forceful response has come from Bryan Taylor, a former state senator running for the GOP nomination for chief justice. Taylor wrote on [X](#) that he believes “we can uphold the sanctity of life without subjecting IVF clinics to lawsuit abuse.”

Taylor also wrote that he hopes the legislature would “act quickly with the dual aim to protect life and support families. Alabama lawmakers [advanced](#) bills to [protect IVF](#) this week.

Telehealth abortions increased post-Dobbs, report shows



*Telehealth abortions rose to 16% as of September 2023 following the end of the federal right to abortion in 2022, according to the Society of Family Planning.
(Getty Images)*

The number of abortions in the U.S. provided via telehealth rose to 16% in September 2023, up from 4% of total recorded abortions before *Roe v. Wade* fell, according to the Society of Family Planning’s latest [#WeCount report](#). **There were 13,770 telehealth abortions in September.**

“Telehealth abortion has really had a huge impact,” Ushma Upadhyay, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco’s Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health, told [States Newsroom](#). “We’re addressing unmet need that existed in those states, even

before Dobbs. I think that a lot of the unmet need in the blue states is being met, as well as people traveling from states with abortion bans.”

Overall, **between 81,000 to 89,000 abortions occurred monthly from July to September 2023**, numbers that were slightly smaller than a [previous report](#) covering April through June 2023, but higher than the months before the U.S. Supreme Court Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision in June 2022.

However, there were 120,000 fewer abortions in the 14 states with near-total abortion bans compared to the period before Dobbs, according to the report. **Texas** (46,200), **Georgia** (24,640), **Tennessee** (17,545), **Louisiana** (11,465), and **Alabama** (9,525) saw the largest declines in the 15 months post-Dobbs; **Illinois** (28,665), **Florida** (15,155), and **California** (12,515) saw the largest increases in reported abortions.

WV Senate passes bill requiring students to watch video made by anti-abortion group

Eighth grade and 10th grade public school students in West Virginia could soon be required to watch a fetal development video produced by **LiveAction**, an anti-abortion group. The state Senate passed a [bill](#) this week that would add the “Meet Baby Olivia” [video](#) to some curricula, [West Virginia Watch](#) reported. Now the measure heads to the House of Delegates.

“This bill is going to cause fewer people to make a choice for abortion because they’re going to realize what they’re carrying looks like a little baby,” said Republican Sen. Robert Karnes. But **GOP Sen. Tom Takubo, who is a doctor, voiced concerns about the measure** during debate. Takubo said there were “discrepancies in the video that are grossly inaccurate.”

THE PULL *Commentary from North Carolina*

“Rulings such as the one from the Alabama Supreme Court have an undeniably chilling effect on medical practice. Physicians are trained to provide evidence-based care, and care for patients at their most vulnerable moments. They do not train to understand the nuances of criminal law and precious few want to risk felony charges that could rob them of their ability to support their families and future patients, or even land them in prison.” — **Dr. Amy Bryant**, OB-GYN and Society of Family Planning board member, [NC Newsline](#)

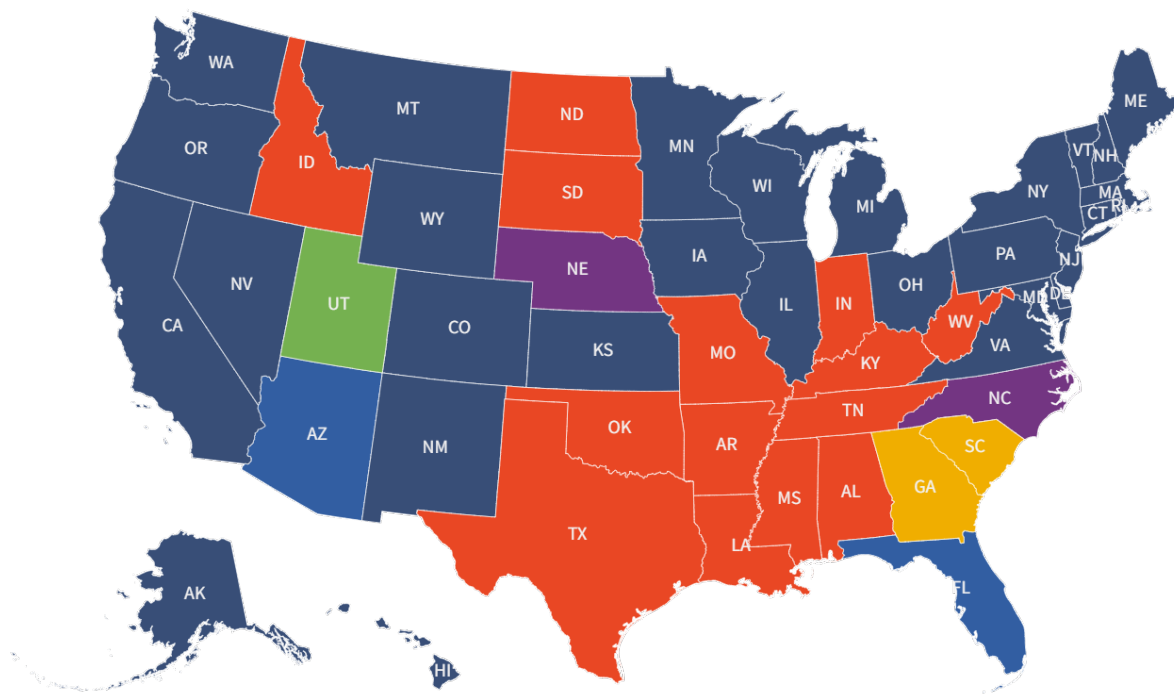
THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, whom reproductive rights groups are suing over abortion restrictions, said she supports removing the state’s 24-hour waiting period for

abortions and similar regulations. ([Michigan Advance](#))

- The Georgia House passed a bill that would make it easier for new or expanded obstetric services to open in rural areas. ([Georgia Recorder](#))
- A federal judge ruled that Texas doesn't have to comply with the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act because the law was passed with proxy votes. ([Texas Tribune](#))
- Women on Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, are at least three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than those with private insurance. ([CalMatters](#))
- U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra met with patients and providers affected by the Alabama Supreme Court's IVF ruling. ([The 19th*](#))
- Two-thirds of 1,020 Americans polled oppose classifying frozen embryos as people. ([Axios](#))

STATE BY STATE Abortion access in the U.S.



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