

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Kelcie Moseley-Morris](#) and [Elisha Brown](#)



The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments in a high-profile case over medication abortion access on March 26.

(Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Dozens of groups are pressing the U.S. Supreme Court to maintain access to a key abortion pill, [States Newsroom](#) reports.

Several “friend of the court” briefs were filed last week in a case about the federal government’s regulation of the abortion drug mifepristone. The justices will hear arguments in *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration* next month. Plaintiffs want to add pre-2016 FDA regulations to mifepristone, which would make the drug only available in-person and reduce its dosage, among other restrictions.

“Restricting access to mifepristone will not only jeopardize health, but worsen racial and economic inequities and deprive women of the choices that are at the very core of individual autonomy and wellbeing,” more than 16 medical organizations wrote in a [brief](#). The groups said that hundreds of medical studies vouch for mifepristone’s safety and efficacy when used along with misoprostol to terminate pregnancies up to 10 weeks.

Twenty-two Democratic [governors](#) argued that barriers to medication abortion would inhibit their role in protecting public health. [Attorneys general](#) from around the nation and more than [600 state lawmakers](#) also submitted similar arguments.

[Civil rights groups](#) wrote that reverting mifepristone guidelines could sharpen racial disparities within maternal health care, while [religious organizations](#) argued abortion should stem from a woman’s “own moral values and religious faith.”

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

State legislators aim to restrict abortion pills, ‘trafficking’ next in states with bans

Legislative Tracker

More than half of state legislatures across the country started their 2024 legislative sessions in January, and plenty of abortion-related bills have already been introduced, especially in states where the procedure is already banned. **It can be hard to monitor them all, so States Newsroom national reproductive rights reporter Kelcie Moseley-Morris will [track](#) certain bills that could become law in their respective states in a biweekly legislative roundup.** Depending on the partisan makeup of a state’s legislature and other state government officials, some bills have a higher chance of passing and becoming law than others.

Iowa

Abortion is legal in Iowa after a court blocked a six-week abortion ban from going into effect in July 2023, but [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#) reports some lawmakers are attempting to include material produced by an anti-abortion group in the public school curriculum statewide.

[House File 2031](#): According to the bill, a video showing the development of a fetus would be required to be shown in health classes in Iowa schools. Teachers would be required to show students a video displaying an ultrasound and fetal development, and the bill called out the “Meet Baby Olivia” video as an example. That video is produced by [Live Action](#), an anti-

abortion organization. Reproductive rights groups say the video contains medically inaccurate information. A similar bill became law in North Dakota in 2023, and proposals have been introduced in Missouri, Kentucky and West Virginia, but only Iowa's bill has advanced past committee so far.

Status: Passed by subcommittee, 2-1

Sponsor: Republican Rep. Luana Stoltenberg

Indiana

Republicans control both chambers of the general assembly and the offices of governor and attorney general, and Republican legislators have introduced two bills that could have significant implications for the state if they advance. Indiana has a near-total abortion ban with exceptions for rape and incest and fatal fetal anomalies or if the pregnant patient faces a serious health risk.

Senate Bill 217 : Prohibits the prescription or possession of an abortion-inducing drug. A practitioner found in violation of the law would be charged with a misdemeanor for the first offense, and a felony for subsequent offenses. Nonprofit organizations would also be prohibited from offering any financial assistance for abortion-inducing drugs.

Status: Introduced and referred to committee

Sponsor: Republican Sen. Michael Young

Kansas

Despite Kansas voters' overwhelming rejection of abortion bans in a referendum shortly after the Dobbs decision in 2022, [Kansas Reflector reported](#) a near-total abortion ban bill introduced in the legislature in early January, [House Bill 2492](#). It's opposed by both abortion rights supporters and opponents, including Kansans for Life, the main proponent of the "yes" side of the referendum. A spokesperson for that organization said legislators should focus on bills that stand a chance of becoming law.

Aside from the ban bill, two other abortion-related pieces of legislation have been introduced, but haven't received public hearings yet. Abortion is legal in Kansas, and six clinics provide in-clinic services.

Senate Bill 354 : Designating facilities where elective abortions are performed as ineligible to purchase professional liability insurance from the state's health care stabilization fund, while maintaining the requirement of liability insurance to remain a licensed facility.

Status: Introduced and referred to committee

Sponsor: Republican Sen. Mark Steffen

House Bill 2515 : Creating a civil cause of action that can be used against a health care provider who injures a child during an attempted abortion, for a minimum of \$10,000 in damages. The bill includes so-called "born alive" language, which has been pushed by anti-

abortion groups for many years and decried by organizations like Planned Parenthood, [who say](#) it is a “problem that doesn’t exist” and doctors are already required to provide adequate medical care.

Status: Introduced and referred to committee

Sponsor: Republican Rep. Brett Fairchild

For more bills, check out [News from the States](#).

Arkansas abortion rights supporters start collecting signatures for ballot measure



*Rachel Spencer, a volunteer for Arkansas for Limited Government, speaks at an abortion rights rally on Jan. 28, 2024 in Fayetteville.
(Antoinette Grajeda/Arkansas Advocate)*

The attorney general of Arkansas recently approved a ballot petition that gives voters a chance to regain the right to an abortion up to fetal viability, [Arkansas Advocate](#) reports. A group behind the citizen-led initiative has already started signature-gathering. Nearly 91,000 total signatures from 50 counties are needed by early July.

During a rally last month, **Arkansans for Limited Government volunteer Rachel Spencer told the Advocate she hopes the state will be the first in the South to codify abortion rights.** “In our world of increasingly polarized politics, it’s so easy to look at a region or a state and write that state off or to think that people in that state somehow deserve the political outcomes that they are receiving, and that’s just not true,” Spencer said.

Organizers are taking lessons from Ohio, where a group of doctors and abortion rights advocates spearheaded a successful reproductive rights campaign last year. Dr.

Lauren Beene, co-founder and executive director of Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights, said working with a variety of groups and sharing anecdotes about how restrictive abortion laws affect patients was key. “That really made people realize that this is so much more than just being pro-life or pro-choice,” Beene said.

Kansas House lawmakers debate birth center liability insurance bill

A [bill](#) under consideration in the Kansas House would make birth centers — alternatives to hospitals best suited for low-risk pregnancies — eligible for the state’s liability insurance. A similar measure failed last year: Democratic **Gov. Laura Kelly** vetoed the law because it would have banned abortion providers from receiving the same insurance, [Kansas Reflector](#) reports.

Republican Rep. Pat Proctor, one of the bill’s supporters, said the proposal could expand maternity care. Less than 50 hospitals in rural Kansas still have [labor and delivery units](#). Kendra Wyatt, CEO of New Birth Company, said the proposal would help her organization. Wyatt said her staff has helped deliver 300 babies and served families in more than 22 counties.

THE PULL *Commentary from Indiana*

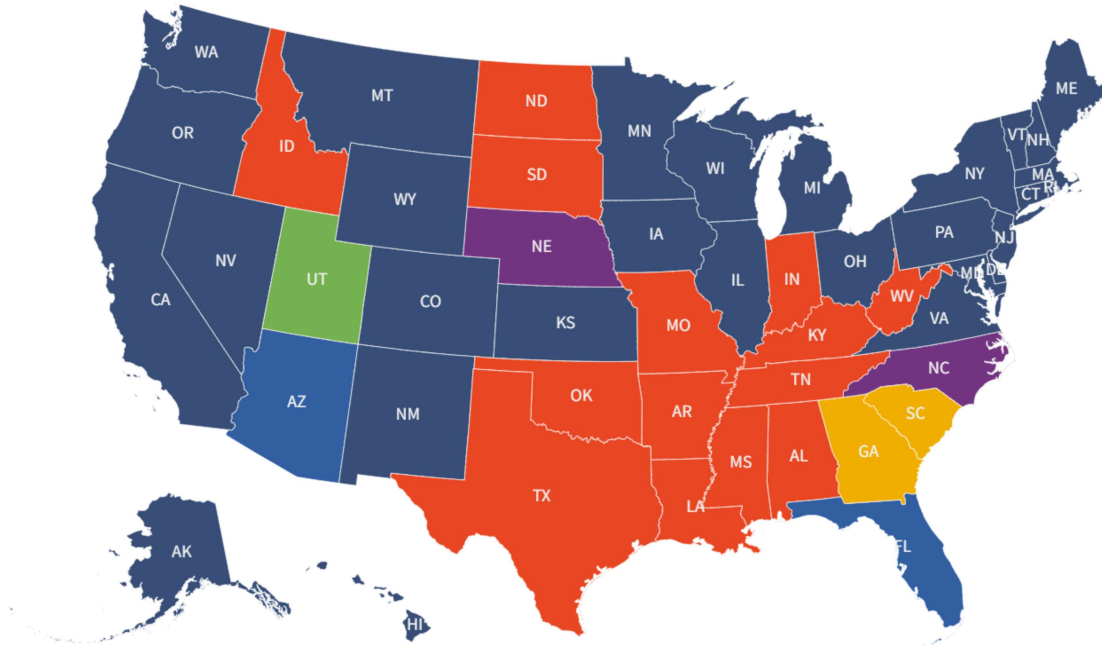
“Democratic Rep. Sue Errington said more and more citizens have asked her why Indiana doesn’t have the same rights as citizens in other states like Ohio to initiate change that lawmakers won’t do on their own. It mostly comes up in the context of legalizing marijuana and protecting access to abortion.” — **Niki Kelly**, editor-in-chief, [Indiana Capital Chronicle](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- The Indiana Supreme Court unsealed the disciplinary documents Attorney General Todd Rokita agreed to after he was reprimanded for making televised comments about an abortion provider. ([Indiana Capital Chronicle](#))
- Virginia’s lower chamber lawmakers passed a bill that would lift a ban on for-profit surrogacy brokers. ([Virginia Mercury](#))
- A bill under review in the Idaho Senate could expand access to birth control. ([Idaho Capital Sun](#))
- Wyoming’s high court ruled that Republican lawmakers and the state’s Right to Life cannot join a lawsuit over the state’s abortion laws. ([WyoFile](#))

- Dr. Damala Karsan, the Texas OB-GYN who unsuccessfully petitioned the court to perform an abortion on a patient with an unviable pregnancy, spoke about the lack of guidance from the Texas Medical Board. ([Stat News](#))

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 X [@elishacbrown](#).

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