

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Two bills in the Missouri Legislature would require courts to consider “the best interests of the embryo” in awarding custody.*

*(Antonio Marquez Ianza/Getty Images)*

A Missouri bill would require the courts to give custody of embryos stored before a couple was divorced to the former partner who is most likely to conceive.

[Missouri Independent](#) reports that **Jalesia Kuenzel**, who unsuccessfully sued her ex-husband for custody of their frozen embryos in 2015, reached out to Republican **Rep. Adam Schwadron**, who is sponsoring the legislation. A similar bill has been filed in the state Senate. “It’s really about trying to protect these women and some men,” Kuenzel said, “who wanted their children, their embryos, and still do.”

**Critics are concerned the measures pave the way for legally defining personhood at the start of fertilization.**

Anti-abortion groups have pushed fetal personhood laws since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022. Organizations like the [American Society for Reproductive Medicine](#) said these types of laws could criminalize some forms of birth control and restrict fertility treatments.

Mary Beck, a University of Missouri law professor, told the Independent that the legislation is “attempting a backdoor approach to giving personhood to embryos.” Schwadron has dismissed the criticism, saying that [state law](#) already defines life as starting at conception.

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## Iowa moves to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage



*Iowa would join a federal program expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months under the governor's bill.  
(Getty Images)*

Lawmakers in Iowa unanimously advanced **Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds' proposal on Monday to extend Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 days to 12 months**. The legislation limits eligibility to people whose families have incomes below at or 215% of the federal poverty line, [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#) reports.

The state chapter of the National Association of Social Workers is concerned about the restrictive income requirements. Still, member Denise Rathman said the measure could improve maternal and child health outcomes. **Iowa is one of three states that has yet to pass legislation permanently expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage**, according to [KFF](#).

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## Ohio attorney general fights for ‘other provisions’ in six-week abortion ban



*Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost is fighting reproductive rights advocates' plan to formally get rid of the state's blocked six-week abortion ban. (Justin Merriman/Getty Images)*

Republican Attorney General Dave Yost's office asked an Ohio court last week to dismiss a lawsuit that would eliminate the state's six-week abortion ban. Lawyers for the **American Civil Liberties Union** and **Planned Parenthood Federation of America** filed a [request](#) with the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas to throw out the ban in December, a month after voters approved a constitutional amendment to secure abortion and related rights, according to [Ohio Capital Journal](#). Yost's team filed a counter response on Friday, saying the attorney general wants to keep “other provisions” in the law, not the ban itself.

**The filing did not specify which parts of the measure are still constitutional. However, a spokesperson for Yost told the Capital Journal that provisions on adoption, foster care and banning the “sale, use, prescription or administration of a drug, device or chemical for contraceptive purposes,” should remain on the books.**

Case Western Reserve University constitutional law professor Jonathan Entin said the new filing was **procedural**. “The lawyer’s job is to provide the strongest case with the strongest set of arguments available on behalf of the client’s position,” Entin said. “The attorney general’s client is the state.” The ACLU and others would have won the lawsuit if Yost didn’t respond, he said.

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## Idaho bill to re-establish maternal mortality board advances to House floor

Idaho is the only state in the country without a maternal mortality review committee — lawmakers let the board disband this year. **House Majority Leader Megan Blanksma**, a Republican, sponsored a bill to restore the panel that advanced in the House on Monday, [Idaho Capital Sun](#) reports . **Two OB-GYNs testified in support, saying the measure should legally shield people who are part of the investigations into pregnancy-related deaths.** “Immunity and protection are paramount — not only for committee members, but more importantly, it protects the members of our close-knit communities where everybody tends to know everyone,” said Dr. Stacy Seyb, who used to serve on the board.

The measure would require the state Board of Medicine to submit a report on maternal deaths annually to lawmakers. Blanksma was skeptical of providing blanket immunity for people involved in investigations, calling it “sketchy.” A separate bill in the Idaho House would bring back the committee under the state Department of Health and Welfare. That measure hasn’t received a full committee hearing yet.

### **THE PULL** *Commentary from Tennessee*

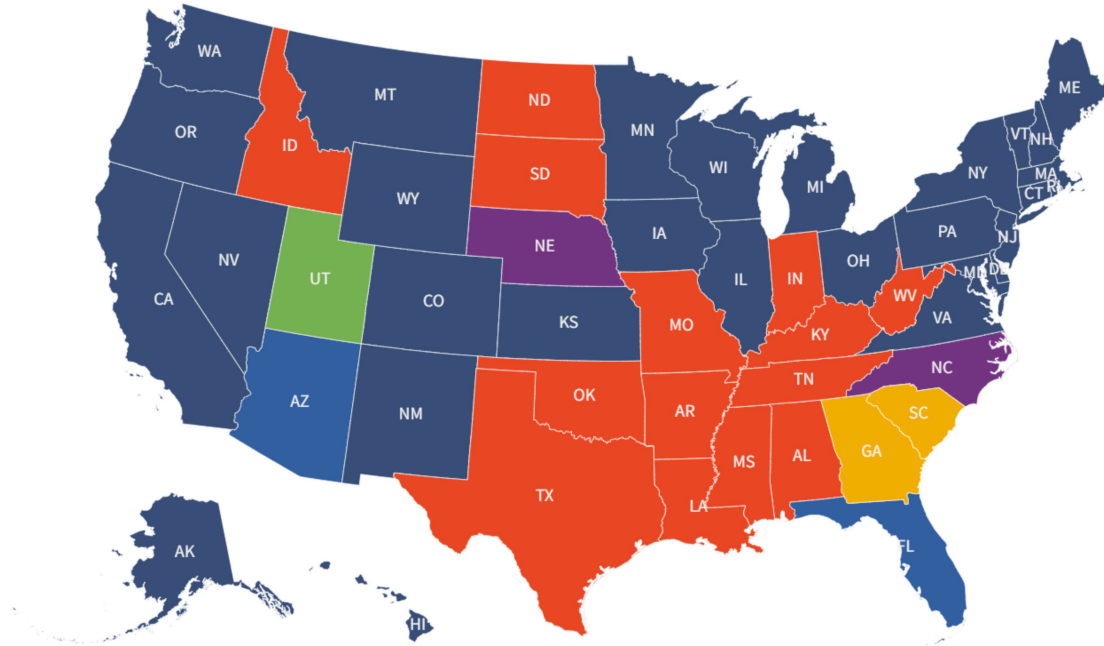
“As a mother, my heart hurts knowing that some children are sexually abused. What hurts more is knowing that we have legislators in our General Assembly who refuse to create rape and incest exceptions to our current abortion laws and then want to add to that injury by penalizing a person who desires to help a child experiencing pregnancy after sexual abuse...This proposed legislation puts the government in control of complicated health decisions rather than trusting families and patients to choose their own futures.” — **Dr. Amy Gordon Bono**, board certified internal medicine physician, [Tennessee Lookout](#)

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

- Connecticut officials determined that a rural hospital should keep its maternity ward open. ([CT Mirror](#))
- Authorities offered \$15,000 total to people who sent tips about a Wyoming woman who set fire to an abortion clinic. ([WyoFile](#))
- Roughly 4,200 people traveled to Colorado for abortions last year, according to provisional state data. ([Colorado Public Radio](#))

- An Illinois man was sentenced to five years in prison after driving his car into an abortion clinic. ([USA Today](#))

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



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