

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Elisha Brown



*Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes lobbyist Taylor Morton testified against bills that she said would legally define fetuses as people and make patients disclose why they got abortions.
(Kansas Reflector screen capture from Legislature's YouTube channel)*

Providers in Kansas would be required to ask patients why they're getting an abortion under a new proposal heard by a House committee Wednesday, [Kansas Reflector](#) reported. The legislation would also make doctors ask patients about their domestic violence history, housing situation and any financial assistance they've received from pregnancy-related organizations.

Mackenzie Haddix, a spokesperson for **Kansans for Life**, said the measure "helps us gain a better understanding of why women are choosing abortion." Haddix's group helped draft the legislation. **Alliance Defending Freedom** lawyer Erica Steinmiller-Perdomo spoke in favor of

the bill, too, saying it would boost public safety and welfare. That anti-abortion organization represents the plaintiffs in a medication abortion [case](#) before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Democratic Rep. Stephanie Clayton questioned how the bill would protect the privacy of rape victims who want abortions. “If someone is the victim of that terrible crime as a child, they should be able to go on, seek therapy and heal and live a full, adult life without having their privacy invaded because they were the victim of a crime,” Clayton said.

On Thursday, House lawmakers debated a bill that would let mothers claim **child support from the time of conception**, according to the [Reflector](#) . Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes lobbyist Taylor Morton said the measure was “nothing more than an attempt to further an anti-abortion agenda.” Kansas voters rejected an anti-abortion constitutional amendment in August 2022, months after the nation's highest court overturned Roe v. Wade.

Critics of the bill have said it would give **fetuses “personhood” rights** and diminish the rights of pregnant people. **Anti-abortion groups framed the bill as a way to insure the responsibility of fathers.** “Alleviating at least some of the financial burdens a mother encounters, beginning with the child’s conception, is a moral imperative,” said Lucrecia Nold, a policy specialist at the Kansas Catholic Conference.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Oklahoma proposal would build database of abortion patients and ban emergency contraception



*Despite abortion bans, Oklahoma’s Republican lawmakers are pushing further restrictions this session.
(Anna MoneyMaker/Getty Images)*

Legislation sponsored by Oklahoma Republican Rep. Kevin West would create a database of abortion patients, allow civil lawsuits for helping an abortion seeker and ban emergency contraception, [Oklahoma Voice](#) reported. Some lawmakers were concerned that his bill would harm patient privacy and outlaw other forms of birth control, such as IUDs.

“If we’re looking at preserving the life of the unborn, I think one of the ways to do that is access to birth control,” said GOP Rep. Cynthia Roe. West said that the conservative legal group **Alliance Defending Freedom** helped him write the bill.

Meanwhile, a bill that would prohibit the possession or delivery of abortion pills passed a committee. Conviction would carry a penalty of 10 years in prison or a \$100,000 fine, according to the Voice. Republican Rep. Denise Crosswhite Hader, who said she had an abortion but regretted the decision, hopes her bill will protect women.

Tennessee considers spending \$2M on ‘baby boxes’



*A Tennessee lawmaker wants to allocate \$2 million to install boxes in each county where people can surrender newborns.
(Roberto Westbrook/Getty Images)*

Abortion is mostly banned in Tennessee, but lawmakers are weighing additional measures, including a [bill](#) that would install so-called “baby boxes” in every county where people can leave unwanted babies. **The devices come with a pull-out drawer and alarms that alert first responders when a baby has been dropped off**, [Tennessee Lookout](#) reported.

“I think this is another tool to help mothers in distress,” said Republican Rep. Ed Butler, the bill’s sponsor. “Unfortunately we’re living in a society where a baby box is the only option.” Butler’s proposal would cost the state \$2 million.

Taylor Sanzo, executive director of A Secret Safe Place for Newborns of Tennessee, told the Lookout the money should go to education and advocacy about the state’s **Safe Haven law** instead. Since 2001, the law has allowed new mothers to give their babies to the state within two weeks after giving birth. They face no repercussions unless the baby was abused. People can drop off newborns at more than 1,500 police stations, hospitals and fire halls, among other locations.

Safe haven laws exist in every state and were initially created as a response to abuse, neglect and infanticide. **The anti-abortion movement has framed the laws, along with “baby boxes,” as an alternative to abortion,** according to the Lookout. Tennessee hasn’t seen an increase in surrendered newborns since a near-total abortion ban took effect in August 2022. Just three cities in the state have the boxes, which cost about \$15,000 each to install.

Missouri high court once again rejects GOP attempt to defund Planned Parenthood



*Planned Parenthood has a dozen clinics in Missouri, but all locations stopped offering abortions after the state enacted a near-total ban in 2022.
(Tessa Weinberg/Missouri Independent)*

For the second time in four years, the Missouri Supreme Court denied a request from Republicans to block reproductive health clinics from receiving Medicaid reimbursements. **In 2022, the GOP-dominated legislature budgeted \$0 for any Medicaid-covered services if a provider offered abortion or was affiliated with an abortion provider,** [Missouri Independent](#) reported. Most abortions in the state are illegal, and the remaining Planned Parenthood affiliates don't provide them. They offer a host of other services, including birth control and STI testing.

The court [ruled](#) Wednesday that the budget exemption was unconstitutional

. Advocates for Planned Parenthood said cutting off Medicaid funding would hurt low-income Missourians who can't afford care. An attorney for the group argued in November that the only constitutional way to stop a provider from receiving Medicaid payments would be through state statute. Debate over a bill that would take that route went [failed](#) last week, according to the Independent.

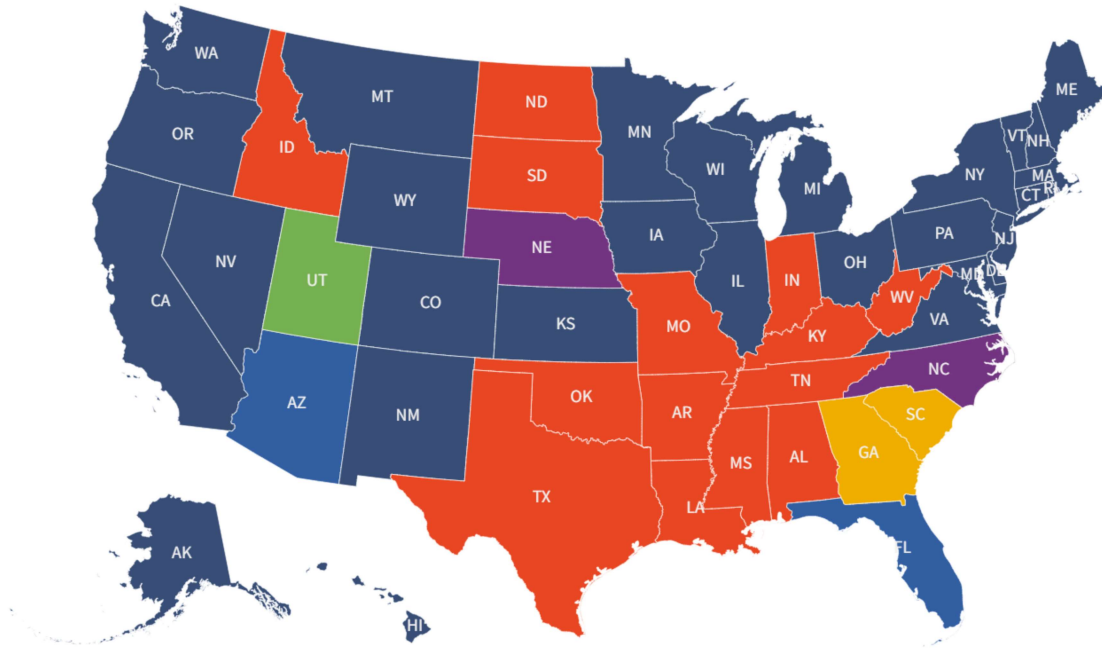
THE PULL *Commentary from Virginia*

“Abortion rights and access to voting are areas of deep partisan disagreement, both nationally and here in Virginia, and they’re also two areas where [Americans](#) generally [side](#) with Democrats. By pursuing constitutional amendments on these issues, the Democrats could not only remind citizens of which party was on their side, but could also bypass Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who cannot veto amendment proposals like he can with legislation.” — **Richard Meagher**, Randolph-Macon College political scientist professor, [Virginia Mercury](#).

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Virginia Democrats tabled an abortion rights resolution until next year, but they advanced bills that would protect menstrual data on period-tracking apps and create a state-level right to contraception. ([Virginia Mercury](#))
- West Virginia doctors would be required to tell abortion patients about “perinatal hospice services” and medication abortion reversal, a debunked method that lacks evidence, under an approved state Senate bill. ([West Virginia Watch](#))
- South Dakota lawmakers have passed legislation mandating health officials create an informational video about the state’s abortion ban and a resolution condemning an abortion rights petition. ([South Dakota Searchlight](#))
- Members of Minnesota’s Democratic-Farmer-Labor party plan to introduce a bill requiring insurance companies to cover infertility treatments. ([Minnesota Reformer](#))
- Republican U.S. Senate candidate and former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan said he would not support a national abortion ban if elected to Congress. ([CNN](#))

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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