

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*Florida Voice for the Unborn leader Andrew Shirvell said a bill that would allow parents to file wrongful death lawsuits for fetuses doesn't go far enough.
(Danielle J. Brown photo)*

Republicans in Florida say legislation that would let expectant parents collect damages in wrongful death lawsuits for fetuses wouldn't apply to frozen embryos created through in vitro fertilization.

Some anti-abortion supporters oppose IVF, which gained considerable attention this week following an [Alabama Supreme Court ruling](#) that stated frozen embryos are “children.”

But Florida Republican Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka, the sponsor of the wrongful death proposal, said her bill is narrowly written, according to [Florida Phoenix](#).

“It’s about the value of the life of an unborn child, and it’s about a real loss,” Persons-Mulicka said. “Not a loss that was spontaneous or that just happened, but a loss that was caused by the wrong duty of another person.”

GOP Sen. Erin Grall is sponsoring the bill in the upper chamber. Both Persons-Mulicka and Grall sponsored the 15-week abortion ban and the six-week ban, which could take effect if the state Supreme Court upholds the current restriction.

So far, the wrongful death measure has advanced on party lines in committee hearings. Democrats argued the bills would pave the way for establishing [“personhood” at conception](#) along with imperiling **IVF, health care workers and abortion seekers**.

“I’m gonna go ahead and say the quiet part out loud: This bill is a backdoor to further reduce access to reproductive health care,” Democratic Rep. Lavon Bracy Davis said during a hearing on Wednesday.

Anti-abortion advocate Andrew Shirvell, founder of **Florida Voice for the Unborn**, told the Phoenix the bill doesn’t go far enough. “There are hundreds of thousands of unborn children that are frozen as human embryos in this country including tens of thousands in Florida,” Shirvell said. “We need to expand the definition.”

Abortion rights supporters condemned the bill, particularly aspects that make providers subject to lawsuits. “This will lead to doctors denying necessary health care and will increase the likelihood of pregnancy complications not being timely addressed for fear of being sued,” said Kara Gross, senior policy counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

South Dakota bill would allow residents to withdraw signature from abortion initiative petition



*The South Dakota House passed a bill sponsored by Republican Rep. Jon Hansen that would let people revoke petition signatures.
(Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)*

Abortion could be on the ballot this fall in South Dakota, where pregnancy termination is banned unless the patient's life is at risk. A group is gathering signatures for a petition that would allow abortion up to [12 weeks](#) of pregnancy. But **House lawmakers just passed a bill that would let people remove their signatures** from petitions, [South Dakota Searchlight](#) reported.

The law would become effective immediately if the state Senate approves the measure. GOP **Rep. Jon Hansen**, the bill's sponsor, said he drafted the legislation in direct response to the proposed constitutional amendment.

"People have approached me and they said, 'Hey, I signed that abortion petition because I thought it was pro-life. That's what they led me to believe,'" said Hansen, who also serves on the board of directors of South Dakota Right to Life.

Rick Weiland is the chairman of Dakotans for Health, the group behind the petition that has already collected more than **50,000** signatures. He told Searchlight via email that Hansen and other anti-abortion lawmakers are afraid of the citizen-led effort: "Could it be that they know that simple restoration of the reproductive rights women had before the politicians and judges took them away is what South Dakota wants?"

Kentucky teachers could get 20 days of paid maternity leave under GOP proposal

School teachers could get four work weeks of maternity leave under a [bill](#) that recently passed out of the Kentucky Senate. Republican Sen. Lindsey Tichenor sponsored the measure, which would provide 20 days of paid time off to public school employees after they give birth, [Kentucky Lantern](#) reported. **Teachers and other school staff could use their sick leave after they finish the maternity time bank.**

Tichenor said she didn't know Kentucky teachers lacked paid maternity leave until her daughter-in-law, an educator, told her about the issue. Nearly [80% of school teachers in the commonwealth are women](#), and Tichenor said younger teachers need time to have children of their own.

The Kentucky Education Association backs the benefit. **Fayette County Education Association president Jessica Hiler said the proposal is a “great start,” but lawmakers could go further by clearing paid paternity leave**, for example. Tichenor opposed that suggestion, saying her bill is specifically for postpartum mothers.

Missouri Senate Democrats' filibuster Republican initiative petition bill

Democrats in the Missouri Senate filibustered a bill this week that could **make it harder to pass constitutional amendments**. Republican Sen. Mary Elizabeth Coleman's bill would require ballot measures to have a statewide majority and a majority vote in five of the state's eight congressional districts in order to amend the state constitution, [Missouri Independent](#) reported.

The fight over the legislation has intensified as reproductive rights supporters gather signatures for a petition aiming to restore abortion access in the state, which has a near-total ban. Democrats said protecting the abortion initiative is one of the main reasons they filibustered Coleman's proposal.

After a **nearly 24-hour** filibuster, nine Republicans joined nine Democrats Monday to vote down several provisions in the bill that critics deemed “**ballot candy**,” including language that would have said non-citizens cannot vote on constitutional amendments. (The state banned non-citizen voting in 1924.) Coleman, a congressional candidate and a [leader](#) of the anti-abortion movement, has framed her measure as a reform bill.

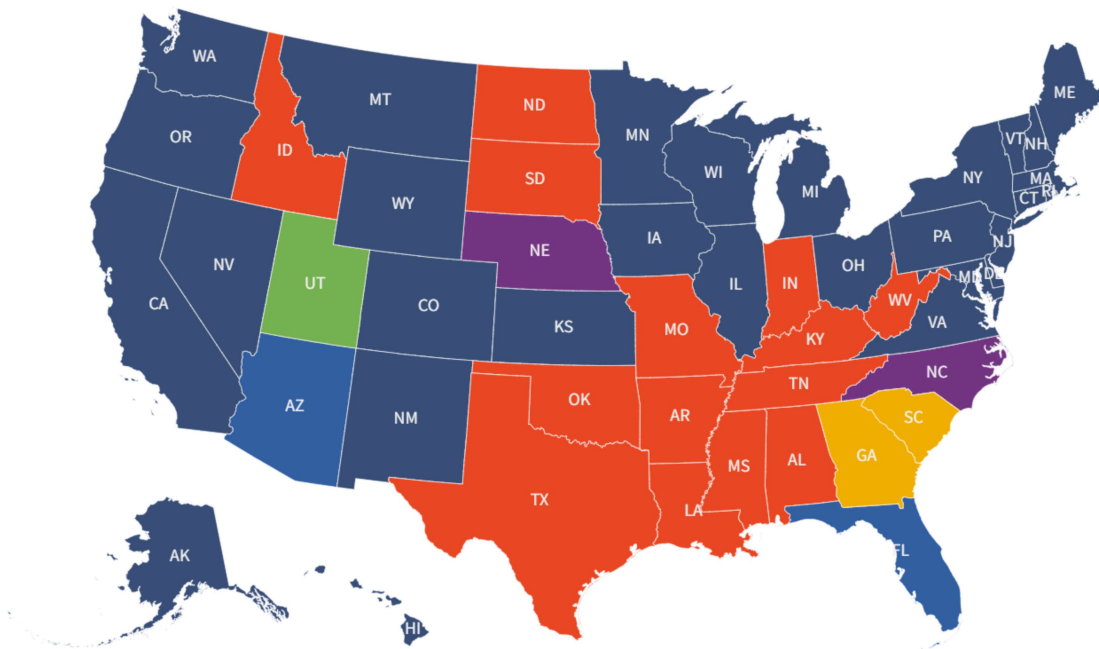
THE PULL *Commentary from Wisconsin*

“Despite his pledge to rise above partisan politics, [Republican U.S. Senate candidate Eric] Hovde's opposition to the Affordable Care Act and his absolutist anti-abortion stance — pledging to protect life starting at conception and supporting the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* — as Republicans prepare to push for a national abortion ban, put him at odds with most Wisconsinites.” — **Ruth Conniff**, editor-in-chief, [Wisconsin Examiner](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- A Republican district attorney asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to review a lower court ruling that allowed abortions to resume in the state. ([Associated Press](#))
- Georgia Democrats are sponsoring an abortion rights resolution that's unlikely to move in the Republican-controlled legislature. ([Atlanta News First](#))
- Alabama fertility doctors and IVF patients are concerned about the effect of the state Supreme Court ruling that frozen embryos are "children." ([The Washington Post](#))
- Constraints at Catholic hospitals limit doctors' ability to provide reproductive health care. ([KFF Health News](#))

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



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