

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Elisha Brown



Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford speaks with reporters outside the U.S. Capitol in December 2023. He blocked a bill Tuesday that would expand IVF access for veterans and service members, citing procedural concerns.

(Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, tried to pass a bill Tuesday that would expand in vitro fertilization access for veterans and military service members, but Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford blocked the legislation.

Lankford said he had procedural issues with the bill, [States Newsroom](#) reported. He said the bill hasn't been debated and reported out by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, among

other concerns.

“The recent chaos in Alabama caused by far-right ideology put a national spotlight on just how crucial IVF is to so many women and families who are desperately hoping and trying to have children,” Murray said.

“If Republicans really do now want to support IVF, if they really do want to help people trying to grow their family — why not start with our veterans and our service members?” she added.

But Lankford rebuffed. “I understand it’s become vogue in this current season right now to be able to say Republicans are somehow opposed to life because they’re opposed to IVF,” Lankford said. “I just don’t find that.”

Murray’s attempt at unanimous consent on the IVF bill follows the U.S. [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) announcement Monday that veterans who are unmarried and in same-sex marriages can access IVF in certain cases. The policy update still only applies to veterans who can prove their infertility stemmed from health issues incurred during active military service.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Maine’s reproductive, gender-affirming care proposal prompts national criticism from Republican officials



A Maine proposal to protect reproductive health and gender-affirming care drew hours of testimony after a TikTok account posted about the bill. Bomb threats targeting the statehouse and Democratic lawmakers were

*reported last week.
(Jim Neuger/Maine Morning Star)*

Proposed protections for patients seeking reproductive care and gender-affirming care — and providers treating them — from out-of-state prosecution are in the spotlight following a bomb threat last week and most recently, national criticism by Republican elected officials. Sixteen Republican state attorneys general sent a [letter](#) to Maine officials Monday, stating that the measure is unconstitutional and would affect enforcement of their own laws.

The letter follows bomb threats made last week that targeted the Maine Statehouse, the Democratic Party and two lawmakers after a social media account posted about the bill, [Maine Morning Star](#) reported. “This political violence is reprehensible,” said Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows on X. Maine Capitol Police determined that the threats were a hoax. Chief Matt Clancy said his team is working on bolstering security throughout the legislature.

Libs of TikTok, a conservative account that has a [history](#) of [targeting](#) the LGBTQ+ community, recently posted about the Maine proposal to its nearly 3 million followers. The post listed the names and contact information of the bill’s sponsors. Lawmakers in the state often share their home addresses online, according to Bellows. “Online extremists are exploiting this transparency to terrorize,” she wrote in her X post. “Shame on them.”

Republican Rep. Kenneth Davis spoke about the threats on Tuesday, calling them “terrible and wrong,” at the end of the House session. “When it comes to family and people’s safety, that letter after your name doesn’t mean a person is bad,” Davis said.

Kansas House committee hears abortion ‘coercion,’ crisis pregnancy center measures



*Kansas GOP Rep. Rebecca Schmoie said a doctor tried to coerce her into scheduling an abortion against her will.
(Sherman Smith/Kansas Reflector)*

Republican Rep. Rebecca Schmoie testified Tuesday in favor of her [bill](#), which would create a **felony crime of “coercion” for persuading someone to get an abortion**, [Kansas Reflector](#) reported. Schmoie said a doctor once tried to convince her to terminate a pregnancy. “Not only was he wrong about me dying,” she added, “he was wrong about my baby dying. That child is now 21 years old. And he is absolutely amazing. I wouldn’t trade a moment of time with him.”

Another [measure](#) weighed by the House Federal and State Affairs Committee would give nearly **\$6 million to organizations that promote childbirth and persuade people to keep their pregnancies**. The groups would be paid to provide pregnancy and adoption information, along with counseling and parental skills. **Women who choose to have an abortion, or have a miscarriage or stillbirth, would be ineligible for the services**, the Reflector reported. Kansans for Life, Kansas Family Voice and the Kansas Catholic Conference back the bill.

Taylor Morton, lobbyist for Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes, said the bill is written in a way that only makes anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers eligible for state funding. The centers “employ a myriad of misleading and harmful tactics to dissuade pregnant people from seeking abortion care,” Morton said. Instead of passing this bill, Zack Gingrich-Gaylord, communications director for Trust Women Foundation, encouraged lawmakers to expand

Medicaid, support birthing centers, remove barriers to birth control and expand access to doulas and midwives.

Idaho lawmakers approve birth control access bill

The Idaho House of Representatives narrowly passed a bill that **would require insurance companies to cover up to six months of birth control prescriptions**. Democratic Sen. Melissa Wintrow, who sponsored the measure, has drafted similar legislation for years to make it easier for women to access contraceptives, [Idaho Capital Sun](#) reported, but it stalled in previous sessions.

Opponents of the bill said legislators should not mandate rules for insurance companies. But supporters said it will make it easier for college students and rural Idahoans to access contraception. Doctors endorsed the legislation, too, saying it could reduce maternal mortality, help women gain economic independence and prevent unplanned pregnancies under the state's near-total abortion ban.

THE PULL *Commentary from Minnesota*

“Abortion rights are meaningless, however, if accessing them is contingent on one’s race, wealth, geography, gender or ability. That’s why we need to build the infrastructure to ensure sustainability for abortion clinics to provide more care to more patients. While patient-centered care is happening in Minnesota, that care’s availability is at risk because of funding gaps.” — **ShaVunda Brown**, Our Justice communications and advocacy director, [Minnesota Reformer](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Members of a New Jersey Assembly committee approved a resolution condemning the Alabama Supreme Court’s IVF ruling. ([New Jersey Monitor](#))
- A South Carolina man was found guilty of obstructing the entrance to a Planned Parenthood clinic. ([The State](#))
- Anti-abortion groups are running ads against Republican lawmakers who back IVF, using the same imagery used to attack Democrats who support abortion rights. ([Politico](#))
- Reproductive justice advocates said opposition against IVF is a “Pandora’s box for Black women,” who struggle with infertility at higher rates than other racial groups. ([Capital B](#))
- Researchers found no solid evidence that restrictive dieting can reduce symptoms of polycystic ovary syndrome. ([The New York Times](#))

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

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