
TODAY

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*Members of Healthcare Workers for Reproductive Freedom wrote a letter urging lawmakers to safeguard IVF treatments.
(Schering AG/Getty Images)*

Doctors in Arkansas joined a national network that’s calling for in vitro fertilization legal protections following the Alabama Supreme Court [ruling](#) that temporarily halted IVF services in the state last month.

More than 2,100 providers signed a [letter](#) released by the **Healthcare Workers for Reproductive Freedom**, which launched its “Save IVF”

campaign last week, [Arkansas Advocate](#) reported.

The Alabama court decision equating a human embryo to a child is an attempt to establish “fetal personhood,” the [letter](#) states. “Though the Alabama legislature has since passed a bill shielding IVF clinics and providers from criminal or civil liability, this ruling underscores the fundamental problem: government interference into patient care is disastrous for patients,” the group wrote.

Dr. Chad Taylor, a Little Rock gynecologist, told the Advocate he signed the letter because he supports the patient-provider relationship without legislative meddling.

“We want lawmakers to stay out of doctor’s offices; there’s no place for them in this kind of decision-making,” Taylor said. “These decisions belong to patients and they belong to experts in health care.”

One of the co-founders of Healthcare Workers for Reproductive Freedom is **Dr. Marcela Azevedo**, who was a prominent fixture behind the campaign to enshrine reproductive rights into the Ohio Constitution. In November, nearly 60% of [Ohio voters approved the measure](#), which explicitly protects access to abortion, fertility treatments and related health care.

Speaking to the Advocate, **Azevedo said her new organization grew out of the Ohio effort, and the Alabama IVF ruling spurred the group to action.** “We all felt that together we had to show that we are here, we are in the background still connecting and still discussing and still fighting to just elevate the rights of our patients nationwide,” she said.

It’s unclear if there are any proposals to safeguard IVF in Arkansas, according to Republican Rep. **Aaron Pilkington**. He said attention is focused on a [petition](#) that could restore abortion access up to 18 weeks. The state has a near-total ban.

“I would guess a large majority of my colleagues would be in favor of protecting IVF in Arkansas,” Pilkington said. “I haven’t heard a single person talk about getting rid of IVF.”

He thinks a protective measure would have bipartisan support. His colleague, Democratic Rep. **Ashley Hudson**, agreed.

“There’s a lot of appeal on both sides of the aisle for issues surrounding those things, so I do think that there’s room for that discussion, that there’s room for that discussion to be productive,” Hudson said. “I’m not saying it’s going to be a slam dunk, but I think that there’s room for it.”

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Alabama infant mortality rates decline, but racial disparities remain



*Black infants die before their 1st birthday at three times the rate of white infants in Alabama, the latest state data shows.
(Stephanie Nantel/ Getty Images)*

The infant mortality rate in Alabama fell in recent years. But the death toll is still higher than the national average, and Black babies continue to die at higher rates than white babies, [Alabama Reflector](#) reported.

In 2022, the state’s infant mortality rate was 6.7 per 1,000 live births, down from 7.6 per 1,000 in 2021 but higher than the U.S. average of 5.6, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health. **The death rate for**

Black infants was 12.4 per 1,000 live births, up from 11 deaths per 1,000 in 2018. **White infant death rates in 2022 were 4.3 per 1,000**, a historic low.

Counties in the **Black Belt**, a region with high African-American populations, had some of the worst infant death rates. The area has [few labor and delivery units](#), and the March of Dimes classifies 25 Alabama counties as [maternity deserts](#).

Republican Gov. Kay Ivey recently announced a pilot program for prenatal check-ups at nine county health departments. “Folks, there is nothing more important than our Alabama families, and we must come together to find common ground on meaningful ways to support them,” Ivey said during her State of the State address last month.

Nebraska safe haven bill advances after sponsor drops ‘baby boxes’ phrase

A Nebraska [bill](#) that would give people more options to surrender their newborns under safe haven laws advanced Wednesday. Republican Sen. Rick Holdcroft agreed to drop the use of “[baby boxes](#)” from the measure after Democratic Sen. Carol Blood launched a **filibuster** against the bill, [Nebraska Examiner](#) reported.

Under the state’s safe haven laws, infants can only be given up at hospitals. **Holdcroft’s proposal would allow babies to be dropped off at fire stations and police departments** and give birth parents 90 days to surrender them. “We are asking women to carry their babies to term, so what are we doing to help them?” he said.

Debate over the bill soured when he suggested installing drop-off baby boxes across the state. “Babies aren’t bank deposits. They don’t belong in a box,” Blood said, comparing the devices to “pizza boxes.” Blood argued that the proposal would advertise the [Indiana-based manufacturer](#) of the boxes. “We’re opening the door for these grifters to come to Nebraska,” she said.

Connecticut anti-abortion activists rally against reproductive rights proposal

More than 1,500 anti-abortion activists called on lawmakers to block a proposal that would enshrine reproductive rights in the Connecticut Constitution, [CT Mirror](#) reported. The [resolution](#) would also ban discrimination based on sex and gender identity.

Connecticut allows abortion up to fetal viability and later in pregnancy to preserve the life or health of the mother. **Lawmakers recently expanded access to abortion for undocumented immigrants and enacted a [shield law](#) protecting doctors who provide abortions to out-of-state patients.**

“Right now in Connecticut, we are home to some of the most heartbreaking abortion laws in the country,” March for Life member Erin Getz told the Mirror. “Fighting to change hearts and minds is worth it.”

Rep. **Treneé McGee**, an anti-abortion Democrat, also spoke at this week’s protest during the March for Life rally. McGee **compared abortions to the death of Emmett Till**, a 14-year-old Black boy who was lynched by a white mob in the 1950s. She told the Mirror that lawmakers should focus on lowering maternal mortality rates and helping women of color pay for student loans.

THE PULL *Commentary from Nevada*

“Now the moment has come for Nevada women and those who love us, to step up and secure the highest level of protection that our state can offer us by including abortion access in Nevada’s state constitution.”

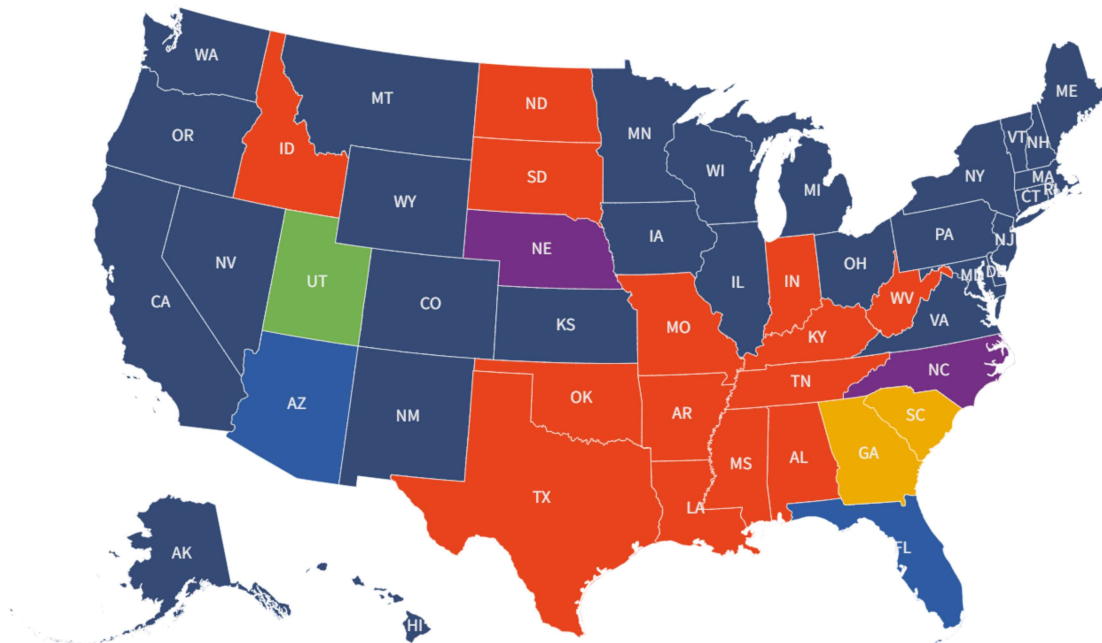
— **Vivian Leal**, writer and activist, [Nevada Current](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news from across the country*

- Proposals in Kentucky that would loosen the commonwealth’s abortion ban, protect IVF and legalize freestanding birth centers haven’t gained traction. ([Kentucky Lantern](#))

- Maryland Sen. Ariana Kelly, a Democrat who led efforts to protect abortion access in the state, announced that she's leaving the legislature to head the state Commission for Women. ([Maryland Matters](#))
- A new poll found that nearly 8 in 10 Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders believe abortion should be broadly legal. ([Associated Press](#))
- Young adults are being inundated with misinformation about birth control on TikTok. ([The Washington Post](#))

STATE BY STATE *Abortion Access in the US*



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