



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

A Year Without *Roe v. Wade*: Working with States to Protect Reproductive Rights

June 23, 2023

Overview

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration has remained steadfast in our commitment to defending reproductive rights. President Biden has signed several Executive Orders and a Presidential Memorandum protecting access to reproductive health care and establishing the interagency Task Force on Reproductive Healthcare Access. Through the Task Force, Federal agencies are taking action to ensure access to emergency medical care, strengthen privacy protections for patients and providers, promote the safety and security of patients, providers, and clinics, and ensure access to health care free from discrimination. In addition to these efforts, **President Biden and Vice President Harris continue to call on Congress to restore the protections of *Roe v. Wade* in federal law**—the only way to fully secure access to reproductive health care for women in every state.

Until these protections are restored in federal law, the White House will continue to partner with state leaders across the country to safeguard reproductive health care access in the states by

By the Numbers:

- **18 states** have abortion bans in effect, and **6 more states** have bans on hold in the courts (as of 6/20/23).
- **More than 23 million women – one in three** – of reproductive age currently live in states with abortion bans in effect.
- Voters backed reproductive rights at the ballot box in **6 states** in 2022.
- **7 new abortion bans** passed so far in 2023 (as of 6/20/23).

supporting proactive legislation and fighting dangerous and extreme abortion bans. This includes working closely with governors, state attorneys general, state legislators, and other officials who are committed to protecting access—and to responding to the more than 350 anti-choice bills filed so far during the 2023 state legislative session.

Over the past year, the White House has engaged hundreds of state leaders to share successful strategies and policy options, and used its platforms to draw national attention to frontline legislative battles over abortion access. These efforts—which included more than two dozen formal convenings led by President Biden, Vice President Harris, the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and the White House Gender Policy Council—helped forge new connections among state leaders and catalyzed new state executive orders and legislation as well as drew national attention to major

state fights. To mark one year since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the White House [hosted](#) more than 80 state legislators from 41 states for a two-day convening to share effective tactics and lessons learned in the fight for reproductive rights in both restrictive and protective states. Vice President Harris attended portions of the convening to hear from participants and express appreciation for their work.

Looking ahead, the White House will continue the fight to restore the protections of *Roe v. Wade* in federal law, defend access to reproductive health care, and support state leaders in protecting access to abortion at the state level.

The Reversal of *Roe v. Wade* One Year In

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, state abortion bans have had a devastating impact on women’s ability to access care, contributing to delays in care, worse health outcomes, and the need for more complex care. In states across the country, women have been turned away from emergency rooms, forced to travel hundreds of miles for the care they need, and left with complications that put their lives and health at risk.

Over the past year, the White House has underscored the impact that these relentless attacks have had on patients and providers. President Biden has spoken out against the horrific consequences of state abortion bans, including on survivors of gender-based violence such as a 10-year-old rape victim in Ohio who was six weeks pregnant and forced to travel to neighboring Indiana for care.

“Does anyone believe ... a 10-year-old girl should be forced to give birth to a rapist’s child? I can tell you what: I don’t. I can’t think of anything as much more extreme.”

- *President Biden at the Task Force on Reproductive Healthcare Access, 7/8/22*

As part of the 2023 State of the Union Address, First Lady Jill Biden invited Amanda and Josh Zurawski as her guests. Amanda, who lives in Austin, Texas, was 18 weeks pregnant when her water broke, devastating her and Josh who had been trying to conceive for over a year. Her doctors were unable to intervene to help her because they were concerned that providing the treatment she needed would violate one of Texas’ three abortion bans. She was sent home with instructions to come back if she developed signs of life-threatening infection, which she did, three days later. Amanda developed sepsis and nearly died because of the delay in receiving treatment. She continues to suffer from medical complications due to the delay, impacting her ability to have children in the future, and has spoken out about the dangers of state bans that jeopardize women’s health. In advance of the one-year anniversary of *Dobbs*, the First Lady [invited](#) four more women to the White House to share their stories of being denied care for miscarriages and significant pregnancy complications—until their condition worsened to the point of endangering their lives.

“I would challenge the hypocrisy of people who say they care about life and then ignore the maternal mortality crisis.”

- Vice President Harris, 3/13/23

Vice President Harris has underscored the link between restrictive abortion laws and the nation’s maternal health crisis. Even before *Dobbs*, the states with the most restrictive abortion laws had the highest maternal mortality rates. Vice President Harris has also highlighted stories of the impact that state abortion bans have on access to other types of care as well,

including treatment for chronic conditions. She and President Biden shared the story of a 14-year-old girl in Arizona who suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis and was unable to refill her prescription for the drug she had taken for years—simply because the same medication could cause an abortion.

In October 2022, four OB/GYNs came to the White House to share their stories with President Biden, Vice President Harris, and the interagency Task Force on Reproductive Healthcare Access, which is co-chaired by Secretary Xavier Becerra of the Department of Health and Human Services and Assistant to the President and Director of the Gender Policy Council Jennifer Klein. These physicians shared the devastating impacts of state abortion bans on their practice of medicine, and the personal impact these laws have on physicians as they consider leaving their communities due to potential criminal consequences of providing reproductive health care to patients who need it.

“Imagine looking someone in the eye and saying – I have all the skills and the tools to care for you, but our state’s politicians have told me I can’t. Imagine having to tell someone – you are sick, but not sick enough to receive care in our state based on our law’s very narrow exceptions.”

- Dr. Nisha Verma, Georgia Physician speaking at the Task Force on Reproductive Healthcare Access, 10/5/22

The White House’s Work with States to Protect Access to Reproductive Health Care

In the absence of a federal law protecting the right to choose, the White House will continue to partner with state leaders to support proactive legislation and fight abortion bans.

Fighting State-Level Attacks on Reproductive Rights

The White House has joined the fight against state abortion bans, bringing national attention to the stakes of state legislative debates and working alongside state elected officials, business leaders, health care providers, young people, and more.

Immediately after *Dobbs*, all eyes turned to Republican Governors in states such as Florida, Indiana, Montana, Nebraska, and South Dakota to see if they would call special legislative sessions on abortion. In response, Vice President Harris quickly [convened](#) legislative leaders from these states to discuss the future of abortion rights in their states and ways the White House could help. On the first day of Indiana’s special session on abortion, Vice President Harris [traveled](#) to the state to stand with the Democratic legislative caucus in opposition to the proposed ban.

“When the Vice President came to Indiana in August on the first day of the special session called to ban abortion, **she brought the national spotlight to our state and fight.**

While we are relieved that our state’s ban is temporarily blocked in court, we have a long road ahead to secure reproductive rights in Indiana and are grateful for the continued partnership of the Biden-Harris Administration.”

- *Indiana House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta*

As part of her travel to 16 states and meetings with more than 250 state legislators over the past year, the Vice President met with state leaders, health care providers, and advocates in states such as [Florida](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Virginia](#) – all places where Republican state elected officials were considering abortion bans. And in Florida, on what would have been the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Vice President marked the moment in history—the first time that the Supreme Court took away a constitutional right so fundamental to so many American people—while calling attention to abortion bans in Florida and across the country. Overall, Vice President Harris has held nearly 50

convenings to bring together leaders on the frontlines fighting to protect reproductive rights.

The White House has also brought state leaders to Washington, DC and together virtually to share best practices and successful strategies. In a fall 2022 White House [convening](#) of legislators from 12 states that have banned abortion and additional informal gatherings, leaders developed a multi-state network of like-minded partners and planned for legislative fights in the months ahead. In January 2023, the White House [convened](#) a meeting of legislators from states on the frontlines of the fight for reproductive rights, during which legislators discussed their strategies to defend against new attacks on reproductive rights this session. Many of these legislators attended the subsequent June 2023 [convening](#) at the White House to reflect on tactics from the 2023 session and plan for a proactive policy and messaging agenda in the year ahead.

Supporting State Efforts to Safeguard Access to Reproductive Health Care

The White House has also supported a network of state legislative leaders in states where abortion rights remain protected – facilitating an exchange of policy ideas to support legislators’ agendas to strengthen access to care. Vice President Harris has highlighted the progress being made by legislative leaders in travel to states such as California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey – and celebrated further progress in states such as Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Vermont, and Washington.

“You all have not only been local and state leaders but **national leaders** in defending, fighting for, and protecting the rights of the American people.”

- *Vice President Harris in Pennsylvania, 7/16/22*

By the one-year anniversary of *Dobbs*, the White House will have hosted five formal working-group meetings of state legislators drafting and advancing bills to protect access in states where abortion remains lawful. These meetings have featured speakers such as senior officials in New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy’s administration to discuss allocating state funds to train the next generation of physicians providing the full range of reproductive health care. Other states, such as California and Maryland, have similarly dedicated funds to support provider recruitment and training.

“The White House has put together an invaluable network for state legislators across the country to share **ideas, tactics, and bill language**. It has been great to be able to share the progress California has made on protecting access – including our success in allocating **more than \$200 million for reproductive health care** and enshrining the right to abortion and contraceptives in our state constitution – and with each working session, I came away with **new ideas** and ways to further strengthen those efforts.”

- *California Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins*

Provider training is just one example of the policies discussed in these meetings that have since been signed into law in states across the country. In 2022, 12 states enacted more than 35 bills to support access to reproductive health care, and so far in 2023, 14 states have enacted legislation to protect reproductive rights. These initiatives range from codifying reproductive rights in state law in Minnesota to new laws that protect health care providers and patients from out-of-state prosecution in states such as Colorado and Washington. Leaders in these states have also adopted new measures to protect personal health data, require health insurers to cover abortion services, and expand access to contraception.

Beyond state legislators, the White House has engaged governors, state attorneys general, lieutenant governors, and more in the fight to protect access to reproductive health care. Soon after the *Dobbs* decision, President

Biden [met with Governors](#) to discuss state actions, including executive orders to protect providers and patients, funding to support increased demand for care in states with abortion access, and new tools to provide women with accurate information about their rights. Following this meeting, Democratic governors of seven states issued new executive orders to protect reproductive rights.

Vice President Harris, a former Attorney General herself, met with state attorneys general [leading up to](#) and [following](#) the *Dobbs* decision to discuss their role in the fight for reproductive rights—from challenging state bans to informing state residents about their rights. Attorneys general have since established task forces to coordinate their efforts on reproductive rights, convened law firms and nonprofit organizations to provide legal support to patients and providers, and launched hotlines to provide legal guidance and resources to the public. Many of these state actions complemented national-level work by the Biden-Harris Administration.

Looking Ahead

While the majority of states have adjourned for the 2023 legislative session, many state legislatures will continue to meet this year, providing an opportunity to continue advancing legislation to protect reproductive health care access. State elected officials and coalitions are expected to pursue ballot measures in 2024, building on the progress made through the ballot box in 2022. The White House will continue to support state leaders in the fight to defend reproductive rights while calling on Congress to restore the protections of *Roe v. Wade* in every state in the nation.