

The Ongoing State of Abortion Rights

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On April 14th, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a 15-week abortion law into effect, banning abortions after 15 weeks into a pregnancy. The law will be implemented on June 1st as a replacement for the current 24-week ban. Florida joins Arizona, Idaho, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Wyoming as states with some variation of abortion bans enacted. Specifically, Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt declared abortion a felony just two days prior. On March 24th, Arizona implemented a 15-week abortion ban like Florida. And although Kentucky and Idaho federal courts temporarily blocked the 15-week abortion law, there is still an aggressive and unrelenting Republican push across the country to limit and restrict abortion.

This hostile wave of abortion bans will force many to leave their state to receive the procedure, and certain marginalized communities will struggle to travel and receive an abortion. Florida holds 8.2 percent of all abortions in the United States, making DeSantis' bill a massive blow to women's reproductive rights. However, several states still clarify their intent to protect abortion laws and women's rights to their bodies. States such as Vermont and California confirm the right to

women, with California even stating their intent to be a refuge to those seeking the procedure. Governor Gavin Newsom strengthened abortion funding and access to all women in the state. However, DeSantis did not share the same sentiment. Despite State Senator Lauren Book, a Democrat and victim of rape, proposing an amendment to exempt women from the law if due to sexual violence, the majority Republican chamber rejected it. Within the chamber, several women gave speeches regarding their regrets about having an abortion, or why they chose not to.

The debate became incredibly divisive as lawmakers described their experience with sexual assault. However, DeSantis signed the bill following this debate. The only exceptions in the law are if it is necessary to save the mother's life and prevent serious injury, or for fatal abnormality in the fetus. This list of exemptions is simply not enough, as it does nothing for those who are a victim of rape or sexual violence. While DeSantis believes this will "represent the most significant protections for life that have been enacted in this state in a generation", this is a dangerous and harmful attack on the reproductive rights of women. Several Democrats shared this sentiment with House Democratic Leader Even Jenne stating "Politicians have no business getting between a patient and her doctor. This 15-week abortion ban takes away every woman's right to make personal decisions that should only be made by themselves, with their family, their doctor, and their faith." There is a fear that the Republican party plans to further implement abortion

laws in several right-leaning states as a byproduct of a conservative U.S. Supreme Court. This is evident following the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Mississippi 15-week ban.

Nevertheless, left-leaning states and Democratic officials fight for pro-abortion. Governor Newsom believes "as states across the country attempt to move us backward by restricting fundamental reproductive rights, California continues to protect and advance reproductive freedom for all." It is imperative that, for the sake of protecting the reproductive rights of women, the Democratic Party does everything in its power to preserve a woman's right to abortion.

Update:

The Supreme Court reversed *Roe V. Wade* on June 24th, 2022, officially declaring that the constitutional right to abortion no longer exists. Justice Samuel Alito wrote, "To ensure that our decision is not misunderstood or mischaracterized, we emphasize that our decision concerns the constitutional right to abortion and no other right. Nothing in this opinion should be understood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion." However, Justice Clarence Thomas stated that this decision could mean that several other landmark cases are in jeopardy, including those that legalized gay marriage.

A couple of days ago, President Biden signed an executive order to Protect Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services. While nothing in this piece of legislation will significantly alter

the way women in red states are living, the administration's executive order indicates progress.

Biden's executive order takes on a few key issues:

- **Protecting medication abortion access**
- **Guaranteeing emergency care**
- **Strengthening contraception access**
- **Providing more resources and information:**
www.reproductiverights.gov
- **Protect patient data**
- **Protecting security of clinics**

There is still gray area on the specifics of the plan outlined by the White House, however, it is important that we realize and take into account the steps that are currently being made to protect abortion access.