

OVERTURNING OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO ABORTION WILL JEOPARDIZE OTHER BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

What to know and what you can do right now

By Lauren Himiak



Metropolitan Group

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The Supreme Court's ruling to overturn abortion rights in the United States has been confirmed and is a dangerous decision that will have devastating consequences to the health and future of our family members, colleagues, loved ones, neighbors and communities. *Roe v. Wade*—the precedent that guarantees federal constitutional protections of abortion rights—is connected to numerous other rights centered in constructs of liberty, making the ruling a glaring reminder that our right to privacy, to control our bodies, and to make medical, family and other life decisions without government influence or interference remains under attack.

For reproductive health, rights and justice leaders, advocates and concerned citizens, the writing has been on the wall since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973. Over the past five decades, anti-abortion legislators have chipped away at abortion rights through an onslaught of restrictions—the Hyde Amendment, 20-week bans, waiting

periods, mandatory ultrasound requirements, physician scripts, insurance restrictions, and more—making the procedure harder to access. In 2022 alone, 529 [restrictions](#) were introduced in 41 states, and nearly 90 percent of U.S. counties lack a clinic that offers abortion care.

What happens now?

The national abortion landscape will change very quickly. First, 13 states with “trigger bans”—designed to take effect as soon as *Roe* is overturned—will ban abortion within 30 days: Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Dakota, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Several other states where recent anti-abortion legislation has been blocked by the courts will act next, with lawmakers moving to activate their dormant legislation. In total, **26 states are set to restrict or ban abortion**, affecting more than 36 million women, in addition to all people who can become pregnant, such as queer women, transmasculine people, and nonbinary people. While all of these laws make exceptions for the life of the mother, most do not include exceptions for rape and incest, causing people to bear children under violent or abusive circumstances.

Who will be affected?

Overturning of *Roe v. Wade* will impact us all, but will have devastating consequences on the health and livelihood of those already historically marginalized in the U.S. due to structural racism, ongoing white supremacy, classism and sexism—Black, Latino and Indigenous people and families; people in rural communities; immigrants; people with disabilities; LGBTQ+ people; young people; and people struggling to make ends meet. The ruling will seriously hinder a person's opportunity to access education, employment and build for their future. It will

overwhelm hospitals and medical facilities who are not equipped to care for the amount of pregnancies and obstetric emergencies that will occur. And when forced to carry a pregnancy to term, maternal mortality will continue to [rise](#) in the U.S., which is already one of the [most dangerous high-income countries](#) in which to give birth, especially for Black and Hispanic women who are more likely than white women to experience health complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Abortion is a reproductive rights issue, but it is also an economic and health justice issue. There are many factors that go into a person's decision to seek an abortion, including access to health care, access to a living wage and food, as well as race and gender. Across the country, U.S. Census Bureau information shows fewer Black and Hispanic women have health insurance, especially in states with tight abortion restrictions. For [example](#), in Texas, Mississippi and Georgia, at least 16 percent of Black women and 36 percent of Latinas were uninsured in 2019, some of the highest such rates in the country. People of color in states with restrictive abortion laws often have limited access to health care and a lack of choices for effective birth control. Schools often have ineffective or inadequate sex education. And in almost every aspect of reproductive health, people of color are more likely than white people to experience racism and discrimination in the U.S. health care system.

Overturning *Roe v. Wade* will also have severe consequences for LGBTQ+ people. Members of the LGBTQ+ community rely on local health clinics that provide abortion access because they are facilities that provide affirming, compassionate, non-judgmental care. All people who are capable of becoming pregnant—which includes queer women, transmasculine people, and nonbinary people—deserve accessible and affordable family planning and abortion care. People within the LGBTQ+ community have different needs, including: infertility care and assisted reproductive technologies; fertility preservation services; STI and HIV testing and treatment; mammograms, Pap smears, and other services related to reproductive cancers; screening and support for intimate partner and sexual violence; and gender-affirming services.



Photo credit: Lauren Himiak

What can I do?

As we grapple with the changing landscape of reproductive

freedom, an important step for all is to learn more about reproductive justice and how abortion is tied to so many other rights, including LGBTQ+ rights, equity and privacy. Here are a few things you can do right now to support reproductive freedom:

- **Learn about Medicaid coverage in your state.** Encourage legislators to protect and expand it. [Closing the Medicaid coverage gap](#) is an important step we can take right now. It would provide millions of people with health care coverage that would save lives and reduce health care costs.
- **Donate to a local abortion fund.** Abortion funds are a lifeline for patients who need financial or logistical support to access care. They are critical as more people will need to travel hundreds of miles for this care. Some options are listed [here](#).
- **Connect with organizers in your area.** Call [your local abortion fund](#) and ask what type of help is needed in your area. Your community is likely where you'll have the most impact, and following the lead of people who have already been doing this work on the ground is the most effective way to help.
- **Vote and support voting rights.** It will be imperative that state legislatures, governors and members of Congress support reproductive health and

abortion rights in the states where it will remain legal, as well as protect a person's right to travel across state lines to access abortion care.

- **Discuss the importance of reproductive rights and access to abortion within your communities.**

Abortion access is part of comprehensive health care and benefits us all. Breaking down the stigma surrounding abortion, with compassion and factual data, is a powerful action that we can all take.

Where can I learn more?

To learn more about reproductive justice, support abortion funds, and advocate for reproductive health, we suggest starting with the following organizations:

- [SisterSong](#): The reproductive justice movement was started and led by people of color. SisterSong is a Southern based, national membership organization working to build an effective network of individuals and organizations to improve institutional policies and systems that impact the reproductive lives of marginalized communities.
- [Shout Your Abortion](#): A movement working to normalize abortion through art, media and community events all over the country.
- [Guttmacher Institute](#): Leading research and policy organization committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the U.S.
- [National Abortion Federation](#): NAF works to unite, represent, serve and support abortion providers in delivering patient-centered, evidence-based care. Members include individuals, private and non-profit clinics, Planned Parenthood affiliates, women's health centers, physicians' offices and hospitals in the U.S. and Canada.
- [Whole Woman's Health](#): A privately-owned, feminist health care management company who has gone to court to protect abortion rights. In 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a historic decision striking down a Texas law designed to shut down most of the state's abortion clinics with medically unnecessary restrictions.
- [We Testify](#): An organization dedicated to the leadership and representation of people who have

abortions, increasing the spectrum of abortion storytellers in the public sphere, and shifting the way the media understands the context and complexity of accessing abortion care.

If you are looking for practical information for the long term, consider getting [The New Handbook for a Post-Roe America: The Complete Guide to Abortion Legality, Access, and Practical Support](#), by activist and writer Robin Marty.

Not backing down

Giving states the right to outlaw abortion opens the door to restrictions on other types of reproductive health care, including birth control, emergency contraception, such as Plan B, trans-affirming health care, and fertility treatments. Legal scholars also warn of the impacts to other federal protections rooted in the same implied constitutional right to privacy, including [gay rights](#), [contraceptives](#) and even

[interracial marriage](#). The ruling to overturn Roe v. Wade will have devastating consequences, and it must be a wake-up call for us all. Each and every person deserves access to comprehensive health care, which includes abortion, without barriers or political interference. Now, more than ever, we must consider the ways in which all social justice issues intersect and affect the way

we are able to make decisions about our bodies. It is time to take individual and collective action for reproductive justice so that every person has the freedom to make their own decisions about their bodies and their lives.

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About the Author



Lauren Himiak (she/her)

Senior Director

Lauren is a strategic thinker and creative dreamer working to build a more compassionate and safe world that's accessible to all. She brings deep global experience in human rights, equity, reproductive justice and storytelling. [See her full bio here.](#)