

# [***Arizona governor's signing of abortion law repeal follows political fight by women lawmakers***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BY1-TCJ1-DYMD-61RF-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** ANITA SNOW and MORGAN LEE, Associated Press

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**Body**

PHOENIX — Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs' [*signing of the repeal*](https://apnews.com/article/arizona-governor-abortion-ban-1864-signing-07bba2fa805971be62b800bd89c81a5a) of a Civil War-era ban on nearly all abortions was a stirring occasion for the women working to ensure that the 19th century law remains in the past.

Current and former state lawmakers, and reproductive rights advocates crowded into the 9th floor rotunda outside Hobbs' office Thursday afternoon, hugging and taking selfies to capture the moment. Some wept.

“It’s a historic moment, and it’s a place and time where thrilling moments all come together," Democratic Rep. Stephanie Stahl Hamilton said during the signing ceremony. "It’s a time where we are doing away with what is in the past that doesn’t fit the present.”

Stahl and Sen. Anna Hernandez, also a Democrat, were the two current lawmakers chosen to speak at the ceremony for their efforts to ensure repeal of the long-dormant law that bans all abortions except those done to save a patient’s life.

The effort [*won final legislative approval Wednesday*](https://apnews.com/article/arizona-abortion-1864-ban-repeal-24578e546b69ca087e01034bcaf4aa01) in a 16-14 Senate vote, as two GOP lawmakers joined with Democrats during a session of some three hours where motivations for votes were described in personal, emotional and even biblical terms. There were graphic descriptions of abortion procedures and amplified audio of a fetal heartbeat, along with warnings against “legislating religious beliefs.”

Abortion-ban advocates in the Senate gallery jeered state Republican state Sen. Shawnna Bolick as she explained her vote in favor of repeal, then she was scolded by GOP colleagues. Bolick is married to state Supreme Court Justice Clint Bolick, who voted with the majority in April to reinstate the 1864 law. He faces a retention election in November.

The House previously approved the repeal, with three Republicans in that chamber breaking ranks.

Hobbs says the move is [*just the beginning*](https://apnews.com/article/abortion-dobbs-leak-arizona-florida-kansas-9ee070c3540cb730b251d707e5f98ffc) of a fight to protect reproductive health care in Arizona. The repeal is set to take effect 90 days after legislative session ends, which typically is June or July once the budget is approved.

“This means everything to get this archaic, inhumane territorial law off the books,” said Dr. Gabrielle Goodrick, founder of Phoenix-based Camelback Family Planning, which performs a third of abortions in Arizona.

A 2022 statute banning the procedure after 15 weeks of pregnancy then will become Arizona’s prevailing abortion law.

Abortion rights advocates, led by Planned Parenthood Arizona, have filed a motion with the state Supreme Court to prevent the 1846 law from taking hold before the repeal does. If it's rejected, girls and women could see a pause in abortion services.

The 19th century law had been blocked in Arizona since 1973 with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in Roe v. Wade that guaranteed the constitutional right to an abortion nationwide. When the federal law was overturned in 2022, it left Arizona's in legal limbo.

The Arizona Supreme Court last month took the state back decades and reinstated the ban that provides no exceptions for survivors of rape or incest. The justices suggested [*doctors could be prosecuted*](https://apnews.com/article/arizona-abortion-restrictions-1864-9c68866d69dca38c728dd27b80592e8f) for violating the law, with a maximum five-year prison sentence if convicted.

The anti-abortion group defending the ban, Alliance Defending Freedom, maintains county prosecutors can begin enforcing it once the Supreme Court’s decision becomes final, which hasn’t yet occurred. Democratic Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes is making a push to delay the enforcement of the ban until sometime in late July.

Meanwhile, abortion-rights advocates are collecting signatures to enshrine reproductive rights in Arizona's constitution. A [*proposed ballot measure*](https://apnews.com/article/abortion-ban-ballot-arkansas-rights-43594a834f01473b1bd13562ecaec555) would allow abortions until a fetus could survive outside the womb, typically around 24 weeks, with exceptions to save the parent’s life or to protect her physical or mental health.

Republican lawmakers are considering putting one or more competing abortion proposals before voters in November.

In other parts of the U.S. this week, supporters of a South Dakota abortion rights initiative submitted far [*more signatures than required*](https://apnews.com/article/south-dakota-abortion-rights-ballot-initiative-1add60de74f1985a19d01084d796297d) to make the ballot this fall, while in Florida a ban took effect against most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, before many people even know they are pregnant.

President Joe Biden’s campaign team believes anger over the fall of Roe v. Wade will give them a political advantage in battleground states like Arizona, while the issue has divided Republican leaders.

For the Democratic women who led the effort on the repeal in Arizona, Thursday was celebratory moment but also showed there's more work to be done, they said.

In an interview before the signing ceremony, Stahl Hamilton talked about her early years on the Navajo Nation where her parents were school teachers and where federally funded clinics still limit abortion services.

She talked about a sister-in-law who she said struggled with two difficult pregnancies, one that resulted in a stillbirth and a nonviable one in which “they had to make the heartbreaking decision to terminate that pregnancy, because there was no brain development.”

“And I imagine that had any of these laws been in place during the time when she was needing care, it really would have wreaked havoc,” Stahl Hamilton said.

When the Civil War-era ban was passed, all the 27 lawmakers were men, America was at war over the right to own slaves and women couldn't vote, Hobbs said. Now, the Arizona Legislature is roughly evenly divided between men and women.

Hernandez became involved in ***politics*** after her younger brother, Alejandro, was killed in a police shooting in April 2019. She and her two other siblings have tattoos with his portrait on their left arms.

Her sister is a nurse in labor and delivery, and she has two nieces, aged 16 and 12, she said.

“In this moment, I think of them being able to grow up in the state that we love so much, having the rights that they have,” she said.

Former Democratic state Rep. Athena Salman was so overcome with emotion Thursday that she could barely speak when she was called to the lectern at the signing ceremony. She proposed a repeal of the 19th century law in 2019, three years before Roe v. Wade was overturned.

Salman, who resigned in January to lead an abortion rights group, said she can’t stop thinking about her daughters.

“Future generations will not have to live under the restrictions and the interference that we have had to experience,” she said. \_\_\_

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