

# [***15 times Trump's abortion position shifted over the past 25 years***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BRY-DT41-JBSS-S00M-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; When [*Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45) suggested Wednesday he [*would not sign a federal abortion ban*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/10/politics/trump-says-he-wouldnt-sign-federal-abortion-ban/index.html) if elected to the White House again, it marked the former president's latest evolution on the issue. Throughout his lengthy career in the public eye and ***politics*** going back 25 years, Trump has found himself on every side of the contentious debate, at times shifting stances seemingly to match the ***politics*** of the voters he is trying win over.

The following is a timeline of notable Trump remarks on abortion.

October 24, 1999

While publicly exploring a presidential campaign leading up to the 2000 election, [*Trump told "Meet the Press,"*](https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/trump-in-1999-i-am-very-pro-choice-480297539914) "I'm very pro-choice," suggesting his views were shaped by New York's liberal ***politics***.

"I hate the concept of abortion," he said. "But still, I just believe in choice."

August 6, 2015

His 1999 remarks would become a focal point of attacks from his 2016 GOP rivals as Trump sought the party's nomination for president, this time for real. Asked about them at [*a 2015 debate*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/08/06/annotated-transcript-the-aug-6-gop-debate/), Trump said he had "evolved."

"You know who else has, is Ronald Reagan evolved on many issues," Trump said.

Trump credited his aboutface to a child born to his friends who "was going to be aborted. And it wasn't aborted. And that child today is a total superstar, a great, great child."

March 1, 2016

As he marched toward the Republican nomination, Trump's messaging on abortion oscillated between reaching out to general election voters and appeasing skeptical conservative hardliners. Conflicting comments on Planned Parenthood delivered shortly after a dominating Super Tuesday performance illustrated his contortions.

"Planned Parenthood has done very good work for millions of women," he said. "But we're not going to allow and we're not going to fund, as long as you have the abortion going on at Planned Parenthood. We understand that, and I've said it loud and clear."

"We'll see what happens," he continued, "but I've had thousands of letters from women that have been helped. This wasn't a set-up, this was people writing letters."

March 30, 2016

Trump's strained efforts continued later that month, when, in the span of three hours, the former president advocated for and against punishing women who undergo an abortion.

During a televised town hall, MSNBC host Chris Matthews asked Trump if women who seek an abortion should face repercussions if the procedure were made illegal nationally.

"There has to be some form of punishment," Trump said during the event.

"For the woman?" Matthews asked, to which Trump replied, "Yes."

As backlash to the statement mounted, his campaign put out a statement from Trump saying, "This issue is unclear and should be put back to the states."

But shortly after that, it issued another, longer statement from Trump backtracking entirely.

"If Congress were to pass legislation making abortion illegal and the federal courts upheld this legislation, or any state were permitted to ban abortion under state and federal law, the doctor or any other person performing this illegal act upon a woman would be held legally responsible, not the woman," Trump said. "The woman is a victim in this case as is the life in her womb."

September 2016

Trump [*signed a letter to anti-abortion leaders*](https://sbaprolife.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Trump-Letter-on-ProLife-Coalition.pdf) committing to enacting legislation that would have [*criminalized abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy,*](https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/03/politics/house-vote-abortion-after-20-week-ban/index.html) with exceptions for instances in which the life of the mother is at risk and cases involving rape or incest. The bill, which passed the House but did not advance in the Senate, was called the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.

October 19, 2016

During a debate with Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, Trump pledged to remake the US Supreme Court with nominees who looked unfavorably on abortion.

"The justices that I am going to appoint will be pro-life, they will have a conservative bent," he said.

Trump later in the debate predicted his nominees would help deliver the end of Roe v. Wade - the Supreme Court decision that had guided American abortion policy for decades. By then, Trump [*had released a list*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/05/18/politics/donald-trump-supreme-court-nominees/index.html) of potential nominees he would consider to fill vacancies on the Supreme Court.

"Well, if we put another two or perhaps three justices on, that will happen. That will happen automatically in my opinion because I am putting pro-life justices on the court," Trump said. "I will say this: it will go back to the states and the states will then make a determination."

January 23, 2017

In one of his first acts as president, Trump signed [*a memorandum*](https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-regarding-mexico-city-policy/) blocking the United States from funding organizations that provide abortion services, including counseling.

Four months later, Trump [*signed a bill*](https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/13/politics/donald-trump-planned-parenthood-money/index.html) allowing states to withhold federal money from organizations that provide abortion, reversing an Obama-era regulation. Uncharacteristically, Trump signed the legislation into law behind closed doors and away from television cameras.

January 24, 2020

With his reelection campaign underway, Trump became the first sitting president to attend [*the March for Life rally*](https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-47th-annual-march-life/), an annual anti-abortion protest in Washington.

Speaking to a crowd gathered on the National Mall, Trump delivered his most striking and emphatic defense of his anti-abortion agenda, articulating a deep and unapologetic opposition in no uncertain terms. Repeatedly evoking Christianity, he reiterated a pledge to "veto any legislation that weakens pro-life policies or that encourages the destruction of human life."

"Unborn children have never had a stronger defender in the White House," he said. "And as the Bible tells us, each person is 'wonderfully made.'"

June 24, 2022

Trump claimed victory after the Supreme Court, led by his three nominees, handed down a 6-3 decision in Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health that ended the federal right to an abortion.

Calling it "the biggest WIN for LIFE in a generation," Trump - more than a year after he left the White House - said the outcome was "only made possible because I delivered everything as promised, including nominating and getting three highly respected and strong Constitutionalists confirmed to the United States Supreme Court."

"It was my great honor to do so!"

January 1, 2023

After fallout from the Dobbs decision ushered in a wave of Republican losses in the midterms, Trump blamed the anti-abortion hardliners for those defeats in a New Years Day message [*shared on his social media site Truth Social*](https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/109615636263894025).

"It wasn't my fault that the Republicans didn't live up to expectations in the MidTerms," Trump, who had announced his latest presidential campaign just a week after the 2022 elections, wrote. "It was the 'abortion issue,' poorly handled by many Republicans, especially those that firmly insisted on No Exceptions, even in the case of Rape, Incest, or Life of the Mother, that lost large numbers of Voters."

Days later, Trump would lash out again, this time at evangelical leaders for withholding support from his third White House bid.

"Nobody has ever done more for Right to Life than Donald Trump," Trump said [*in an interview*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/18/politics/donald-trump-evangelicals-2024/index.html). "I put three Supreme Court justices, who all voted, and they got something that they've been fighting for 64 years, for many, many years."

He added: "There's great disloyalty in the world of ***politics*** and that's a sign of disloyalty."

September 17, 2023

Throughout the most recent GOP presidential primary, as he ducked his opponents and dodged debates, Trump also avoided taking a stance on federal legislation to restrict abortion.

In the rare event he spoke about abortion during the primary, it was usually to reinforce his stance that Republicans made themselves politically vulnerable by rushing to restrict access to the procedure after the Dobbs decision. [*That included criticizing*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-desantis-abortion-ban-republican-primary-5bdbba55f9c2f328d49b5fbe9727677e) his home state governor and Republican primary rival Ron DeSantis for signing a law that banned abortion in most instances six weeks into a pregnancy.

"I think what he did is a terrible thing and a terrible mistake," Trump said.

DeSantis and other Republican hopefuls seized on Trump's remarks to drive a wedge between the former president and the GOP base, to no avail.

March 19, 2024

To the confusion and frustration of some within his campaign, Trump more recently had flirted with supporting a federal abortion ban at 15 weeks.

During a recent radio appearance, Trump said - without evidence - that "people are agreeing on 15, and I'm thinking in terms of that, and it'll come out to something that's very reasonable."

[*CNN reported last week*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/04/politics/trump-abortion-policy-tease/index.html) that several Trump confidants, including former adviser Kellyanne Conway and South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, lobbied the former president to support a federal abortion ban.

April 2, 2024

A pair of Florida Supreme Court rulings - one paving the way for a six-week abortion ban in the state, the other giving Floridians a chance in November to enshrine abortion access in the state's constitution - put the Sunshine State's most famous citizen on notice.

Trump, who resides in Florida and will have the state's abortion referendum on his ballot this fall, avoided weighing in on the latest developments in his home state during an appearance in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"We'll be making a statement next week on abortion," Trump teased instead.

April 8, 2024

In a lengthy video statement, Trump says "states will determine by vote or legislation or perhaps both" the future of abortion access in America, effectively declining to support a federal abortion ban.

Trump in his remarks thanked the six Republican-appointed justices who overturned Roe v. Wade, saying they had "courage to allow this long-term, hard-fought battle to finally end."

"This 50-year battle over Roe v. Wade took it out of the federal hands and brought it into the hearts, minds, and vote of the people in each state, it was really something," he said. "Now, it's up to the states to do the right thing."

Trump went on to suggest support for exceptions for victims of rape and incest or in cases when a mother's health may be in danger, but stopped well short of suggesting federal legislation to protect access for women facing those scenarios. Many of the states that have restricted abortion do not have those exceptions, and some that do have onerous requirements that have left pregnant women and doctors confused and fearing legal retaliation.

April 10, 2024

Trump said he would not sign a national abortion ban if elected president, reversing a promise he made as a candidate in 2016 and one that he had stood by during his first term in the White House.

Appearing on a tarmac in Atlanta, Trump was asked by a reporter if he would sign a national abortion ban if it passed Congress.

"No," the former president said, shaking his head.

"You wouldn't sign it?" the reporter asked.

"No," Trump said again.

This story and headline have been updated with additional information.

By Steve Contorno and Kate Sullivan, CNN

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