

# [***Trump says abortion legislation should be left to states***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BRR-HX41-JBSS-S01B-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Former [*President Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45) said Monday that abortion rights should be left to the states, offering his clearest stance yet on one of the most [*delicate and contentious issues*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/04/politics/trump-abortion-policy-tease/index.html) in American ***politics***.

"My view is now that we have abortion where everyone wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation, or perhaps both. And whatever they decide must be the law of the land. In this case, the law of the state," Trump said in a video posted to his Truth Social account.

"Many states will be different," Trump continued. "Many will have a different number of weeks, or some will have more conservative than others, and that's what they will be. At the end of the day, this is all about the will of the people."

Trump [*had previously suggested*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/19/politics/trump-thinking-in-terms-of-15-week-federal-abortion-ban/index.html) he could support a 15-week federal ban with exceptions in the cases of incest, rape and when the life of the mother is in danger. However, his ultimate decision to punt the [*politically fraught issue*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/06/22/politics/trump-abortion-politics-2024/index.html) to the states and not back a national ban was swiftly denounced by a major anti-abortion rights organization, which said his position did not go far enough.

In Monday's video, Trump said he was "proudly the person responsible" for the Supreme Court's [*overturning of Roe v. Wade*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/24/politics/dobbs-mississippi-supreme-court-abortion-roe-wade/index.html), which he said took the issue "out of the federal hands and brought it into the hearts, minds, and vote of the people in each state."

The former president did not indicate the number of weeks during a pregnancy at which he thought it would be appropriate to ban abortion but reiterated his support for certain exceptions. He previously [*publicly derided six-week state abortion bans*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/21/politics/trump-abortion-blowback/index.html) as "terrible" and acknowledged that the debate over the procedure has plagued Republicans at the ballot box since the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision eliminated federal abortion protections.

Trump told reporters last week that he would be making a "statement" on abortion when pressed about [*Florida's six-week abortion ban*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/01/politics/florida-six-week-abortion-ban/index.html), which is set to become law after a recent state Supreme Court ruling.

Trump's video Monday garnered immediate backlash from leading anti-abortion group Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, which set a 15-week national ban as its standard for Republican candidates in the presidential primary.

"We are deeply disappointed in President Trump's position. Unborn children and their mothers deserve national protections and national advocacy from the brutality of the abortion industry. The Dobbs decision clearly allows both states and Congress to act," the group's president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, said.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, said he "respectfully" disagreed with the former president, asserting that "the pro-life movement has always been about the wellbeing of the unborn child - not geography."

Former Vice President Mike Pence, who dropped out of the GOP presidential race in October, said [*on social media*](https://twitter.com/Mike_Pence/status/1777372198384078877) that his onetime boss's announcement was a "retreat on the Right to Life" and a "slap in the face to the millions of pro-life Americans who voted for him in 2016 and 2020."

Trump hit back at the criticism later Monday on social media.

"Lindsey, Marjorie, and others fought for years, unsuccessfully, until I came along and got the job done," the former president said on his Truth Social platform. "We cannot let our Country suffer any further damage by losing Elections on an issue that should always have been decided by the States, and now will be!"

In response to Trump's criticism, Graham defended his position in support of a 15-week abortion ban. "It's a state issue, but as the child develops, it can feel pain," he argued.

"States, do it the way you want to do it," Graham told CNN. "But there comes a point where we need to align ourselves with the civilized world, and to me, it's 15 weeks."

Trump in his video falsely claimed that "all legal scholars, both sides" wanted Roe v. Wade terminated and that we now have "abortion where everybody wanted it, from a legal standpoint." Many scholars who support abortion rights, as well as a clear majority of Americans in opinion polls, did not support the overturning of the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized the procedure nationwide.

An evolving stance

Trump's [*contortions around abortion*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2023/09/25/trump-abortion-position-evolution-desantis-ban-cnntm-vpx.cnn) go back to his earliest forays into ***politics***. After announcing a presidential exploratory committee in 1999, Trump called himself "very pro-choice" [*during an appearance*](https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/trump-in-1999-i-am-very-pro-choice-480297539914) on NBC's "Meet the Press."

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

As he marched toward the GOP presidential nomination in 2016, Trump strained to distance himself from the remark to assuage conservatives and skeptical anti-abortion leaders. He vowed to install conservative justices on the Supreme Court who would overturn Roe v. Wade. In [*one notable exchange*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/30/politics/donald-trump-abortion-positions/index.html) during the Republican primary, Trump said that if abortion were outlawed, women who undergo the procedure should face "some form of punishment." His campaign quickly [*walked back the remark*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/30/politics/donald-trump-abortion-town-hall/index.html) amid swift backlash, only to have Trump then say that doctors, not women, should be "legally responsible" in that scenario.

Trump's latest attempt to clarify his stance will do [*little to stop Democrats*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/17/politics/biden-democrats-attack-trump-abortion-report/index.html) from tying the presumptive Republican presidential nominee to a [*wave of anti-abortion laws*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/02/politics/florida-abortion-referendum-biden-democrats/index.html) passed in the aftermath of the Dobbs decision - a watershed ruling made possible by the former president making good on his pledge to overhaul the Supreme Court. (Trump appointed three of the justices who voted with the majority to overturn Roe.)

"Donald Trump made it clear once again today that he is - more than anyone in America - the person responsible for ending Roe v. Wade," [*President Joe Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden) said in a campaign statement Monday. "He is - more than anyone in America - responsible for creating the cruelty and the chaos that has enveloped America since the Dobbs decision."

Abortion is banned [*in most cases in 14 states*](https://www.cnn.com/us/abortion-access-restrictions-bans-us-dg/index.html) - including Texas, the second-most populous state in the country. Another seven states have restrictions that prevent abortion between six and 18 weeks into a pregnancy. That includes Trump's home state of Florida, where a [*six-week abortion ban*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/06/us/florida-abortion-ban-health-crisis) will take effect in a matter of weeks.

Though Trump reiterated his support for some abortion exceptions Monday, he stopped short of suggesting national legislation to ensure access to the procedure for victims of rape and incest or when a mother's life is in danger. Many states with abortion bans do not allow for exceptions in cases of rape and incest. Even some that do require victims to prove their assaults by tracking down police reports.

Nor are there ubiquitous regulations for determining when a woman's health is at danger. Doctors in many states with new abortion restrictions have strained to parse vague statutes while risking their medical licenses and even jail time if they run afoul of the law.

"Because of Donald Trump, one in three women in America already live under extreme and dangerous bans that put their lives at risk and threaten doctors with prosecution for doing their jobs. And that is only going to get worse," Biden said Monday.

At a campaign event in Chicago later Monday, Biden argued that "no one" trusts Trump, who he said "made a political deal" to overturn Roe v. Wade. "Trump and the MAGA crowd don't have a clue about the power of women in America," Biden said, according to the traveling press pool. "Trump is in trouble, and he knows it. He's worried voters will hold him accountable."

Against this landscape, abortion rights advocates are pressing to [*get ballot measures in states across the country*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/06/politics/abortion-rights-ballot-initiatives-2024/index.html) this fall to enshrine access to the procedure in state constitutions. Trump in his statement Monday acknowledged that voters will ultimately decide the fate of abortion access in some states.

However, Trump has yet to say how he would vote on an abortion access measure that will appear on his own Florida ballot this November.

This story has been updated with additional information.

CNN's [*Alayna Treene*](https://www.cnn.com/profiles/alayna-treene), Nikki Carvajal, Alison Main, Sam Fossum, Melanie Zanona and Lauren Fox contributed to this report.

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