

# [***Trump's Big Abortion Gamble Won't Save Him | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BRS-FK41-DY68-100C-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Since the Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision, Democrats have overperformed expectations and have come out on top every time the question of reproductive rights has been put directly before the voters.

**Body**

Abortion bans are political losers for [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), which puts the man who made all this abortion-banning possible by stacking the [*Supreme Court*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/supreme-court?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) with religious zealots—former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)—in an awkward political position. And his [*video announcement today*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/08/us/politics/trump-abortion-states.html) that he believes whatever states decide about abortion "must be the law of the land" is not likely to be the political salve that he thinks it might be.

At first glance, Trump's needle-threading on this issue looks astute. *Dobbs* has clearly been the GOP's Achilles heel for the past two years, and Trump most certainly does not want the election to be about reproductive rights. Suburban swing voters who might otherwise be inclined to vote for Biden because of *Dobbs* can now take another look at Trump and Republicans and conclude that perhaps they have moderated their stance enough to look past it.

But publicly supporting abortion rights in the more than 20 states where the procedure remains legal could cost Trump with his most committed voters—white evangelical Christians. Eighty-four percent of white evangelicals voted for Trump in 2020, along with 57 percent of white Catholics, [*according to*](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/08/30/most-white-americans-who-regularly-attend-worship-services-voted-for-trump-in-2020/) a post-election analysis by Pew. Of self-identified white evangelicals who voted in 2020, two-thirds said that they attended religious services regularly, meaning that the group that gave Trump his biggest margin in the election is comprised of those who are most committed to their faith's principles. And another Pew project [*confirmed*](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/06/americas-abortion-quandary/) that white evangelicals are much more likely than any other group to say that religion influences their views on abortion. Twenty-one percent of white evangelicals, far more than any other religious subgroup, say that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances.

You must therefore wonder how this group of high-propensity voters that is absolutely critical to any [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) victory this November is going to take this news. My guess is "not well." While some Republicans might be satisfied with the end of *Roe* and abortion bans or impossible restrictions [*in 21 states*](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/us/abortion-laws-roe-v-wade.html), the most religious white evangelicals want total victory. And Trump just told them they won't get it. Marjorie Dannenfelser, the president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, [*issued a statement*](https://twitter.com/sbaprolife/status/1777313909554233666)almost immediately after Trump's video dropped saying that she was "deeply disappointed," although still committed to defeating President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). While we shouldn't expect his position to cause dramatic change in his white evangelical support, even a few points could be determinative it what looks like it is going to be an extremely close election.

The other problem here for Trump is that, unlike him, people who care about restoring reproductive rights are not stupid. He did not say whether he would sign an abortion ban if it crossed his desk, a tightrope he will not be able to walk all the way to November without being pressed for a firm up-or-down answer. In private, he has previously said that he would sign a 16-week national abortion ban. And throwing up his hands and saying "let the states decide" still leaves tens of millions of furious women living [*in states*](https://states.guttmacher.org/policies/pennsylvania/abortion-policies) where abortion has been completely banned – including Electoral College battleground states like North Carolina, Arizona, Georgia and Florida—or partially banned, like Wisconsin.

And saying that it should be left to the states also leaves him holding the bag for the most restrictive laws, like the six-week ban that the state of Florida just passed. Will Trump come out for or against the Florida referendum to enshrine abortion in the state constitution? That amendment would prohibit any restrictions on the procedure "before viability." If he supports it, he is endorsing abortion far beyond 16 weeks; if he opposes it, he is effectively co-signing the state's highly restrictive six-week ban.

And there is also the basic Trump problem that no one will or should believe a single thing that this lifelong pathological liar says. This is the same guy that [*promised*](https://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/245884-trump-i-would-rarely-leave-the-white-house/) he would "rarely leave the White House" in 2015 and then proceeded to spend [*roughly half his presidency*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/20/trumps-presidency-ends-where-so-much-it-was-spent-trump-organization-property/) golfing or hanging out at one of his country clubs. The man has possibly the worst baseline credibility problem of any politician on the planet.

Trump's struggles here are illustrative of how "returning abortion to the states" did not settle the issue at all. By stocking the Supreme Court with early-middle-age religious radicals who obliterated the Roe consensus on abortion, Trump all but guaranteed that it will be front and center in our ***politics*** for the foreseeable future. And his efforts to have it both ways won't solve the problem that he himself was the person most responsible for the new status quo that leaves almost no one on either end of the abortion opinion spectrum satisfied.

The practical meaning of the current abortion regime in the United States is that 100 percent of Americans live in a state that could completely ban abortion at any moment. The far right's Project 2025 agenda also contains all kinds of plans [*designed*](https://msmagazine.com/2024/03/29/project-2025-trump-republicans-ban-abortion-pills-mifepristone-trump/) to make abortions harder to obtain even in Vermont or California—with or without a national abortion ban. And that means that Trump's remarks today are unlikely to make you or anyone else feel that reproductive rights are assured in their state, leaving a vote for Joe Biden as the only way to be 100 percent sure that reproductive tyranny won't come to your state.

*David Faris is an associate professor of political science at Roosevelt University and the author of* It's Time to Fight Dirty: How [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Can Build a Lasting Majority in American ***Politics***. *His writing has appeared in* The Week*,* The Washington Post*,* The New Republic*,* Washington Monthly *and more. You can find him on Twitter @davidmfaris.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2375017/supreme-court.jpg)

**Graphic**

At the Supreme Court

Jemal Countess/Getty Images for Women's March

A woman holds up a sign as protesters staged a sit-in at the intersection of Constitution Ave and First St N.E. during the "Bans Off Our Mifepristone" action organized by the Woman's March outside of the Supreme Court on March 26, in Washington, DC.

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