



TRUMP DECLINES TO ENDORSE A NATIONAL ABORTION BAN. HE SAYS LIMITS SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE STATES - ASSOCIATED PRESS

Posted on April 9, 2024 by JILL COLVIN and MEG KINNARD | Associated Press



Photo: Former President Donald Trump pumps his fist as he arrives for a GOP fundraiser, Saturday, April 6, 2024

Former President Donald Trump said Monday he believes abortion limits should be left to the states, outlining his position in a video in which he declined to endorse a national ban after months of mixed messages and speculation.

"Many people have asked me what my position is on abortion and abortion rights," Trump said in the video posted on his Truth Social site. "My view is now that we have abortion where everybody 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, in the video, did not say when in pregnancy he believes abortion should be banned — declining to endorse a national cutoff that would have been used as a cudgel by Democrats ahead of the November election. But his endorsement of the patchwork approach leaves him open to being attached to the strictest proposed state legislation, which President Joe Biden and his reelection campaign have already been working to do.

Anti-abortion activists expressed keen disappointment that Trump didn't go further.

In the video, he again took credit for the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to end *Roe v. Wade*, saying that he was "proudly the person responsible for the ending" of the constitutional right to an abortion and thanking the conservative justices who overturned it by name.

While he again articulated his support for three exceptions — in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is at risk — he went on to describe the current legal landscape, in which different states have different restrictions following the court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling on June 24, 2022, which upended the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

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

Trump had long argued that the Supreme Court's decision gave those who oppose abortion rights "tremendous power to negotiate," leverage he said he wanted to use to strike a deal that he hoped would "make both sides happy" and bring the country together — even though the issue is one of the most contentious in American politics, with some opponents viewing abortion as murder and proponents seeing it as a fundamental women's right.



The announcement drew immediate condemnation from SBA Pro-Life America, one of the country's most prominent groups opposed to abortion rights.

"We are deeply disappointed in President Trump's position," said the group's president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, in a statement. "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."

Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, one of Trump's congressional backers and supporter of a 15-week national ban, said he "respectfully" disagreed with Trump over abortion being an issue for the states. Mike Pence — a staunch abortion opponent who served as Trump's vice president, challenged him for this year's GOP nomination and has said he won't endorse him — on X called the stance "a slap in the face to the millions of pro-life Americans" who have previously backed Trump.

Trump took to Truth Social later Monday to lash out at his critics, saying both Dannenfelser and Graham were "of absolutely no help as the Democrats staged rallies and won Elections they should never have won" after Dobbs, adding that Graham should focus instead on "the millions of people dying in senseless, never-ending Wars that he constantly favors and promotes."

Biden's campaign was quick to seize on the moment, with spokesperson Ammar Moussa posting on X that Trump was "endorsing every single abortion ban in the states, including abortion bans with no exceptions ... and he's bragging about his role in creating this hellscape."

In a statement, Biden said Trump has played a part in being "responsible for creating the cruelty and the chaos that has enveloped America since the Dobbs decision," a situation he said is reflected in women "being turned away from emergency rooms, forced to go to court to seek permission for the medical attention they need, and left to travel hundreds of miles for health care."

"Trump's in trouble and he knows it," Biden said at a fundraiser in Chicago on Monday.

In a statement, Jenny Lawson, executive director of Planned Parenthood Votes expressed confidence that the voters who "clearly rejected anti-abortion politics" in other post-Dobbs elections will "do the same with Donald Trump and his cronies in 2024."

In a Biden campaign call with reporters, Texas mother Kaitlyn Kash described her need to obtain out-of-state care after losing one pregnancy, then her difficulty in receiving a "dilation and curettage" procedure after another successful delivery, following the Dobbs decision — situations she laid at Trump's feet.

"What I went through didn't need to happen, but it did because of Donald Trump," Kash said.

Biden's campaign also went up with an ad featuring Amanda Zurawski, a Texas woman they said "nearly died twice after she was denied care for a miscarriage because of the state's abortion ban — a ban that was only possible because Donald Trump overturned Roe v. Wade."

Trump had suggested last month in a radio interview that he was leaning toward supporting a national abortion ban at around 15 weeks of pregnancy but, at the same time, seemed reluctant to embrace a federal prohibition.

Republican-led states have ushered in a wave of new restrictions following the 2022 overturning of Roe v. Wade. More than a dozen GOP-

controlled states have banned abortion outright, while others have outlawed the procedure on increasingly diminishing timelines.

Other reproductive-related procedures have faced restrictions, including in vitro fertilization, which quickly became a campaign flashpoint after the Alabama Supreme Court ruled this year that frozen embryos can be considered children under state law. Trump said he strongly supports IVF availability. Alabama lawmakers and Republican Gov. Kay Ivey agreed to protect IVF providers from legal liability.

Democrats believe the fight over abortion rights helps them at the polls and have outperformed expectations in elections since. Voters in seven states have sided with abortion rights supporters on ballot measures, and abortion is expected to be on the ballot in more states this year, including Florida, Maryland and New York.

Trump has tried to thread the needle on abortion throughout the campaign, calling himself the "most pro-life president in American history" but also blaming GOP candidates who did not allow for exceptions for the party's 2022 losses.

In the video, Trump told Republicans that they must "follow your heart on this issue. But remember, you must also win elections to restore our culture and, in fact, to save our country, which is currently and very sadly a nation in decline."

Instead, he has tried to paint Democrats as "the radical ones on this position."

Democrats and Biden's campaign, meanwhile, have been spotlighting the issue as they work to draw a contrast with Trump.

Polling has consistently shown that most Americans believe abortion should be legal through the initial stages of pregnancy. About half of U.S. adults said abortions should be permitted at the 15-week mark, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted last June.

Data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the vast majority of abortions from 2012 to 2021 were performed within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Kinnard reported from Columbia, South Carolina. Associated Press writers Michelle L. Price in New York and Darlene Superville in Chicago contributed to this report.