

North Carolina bans abortion at 12 weeks, similar ban under way in South Carolina

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A law banning abortion after 12 weeks of gestation passed in North Carolina along party lines after the General Assembly overrode the Democratic governor's veto. The previous law banned abortion past 20 weeks. Governor Roy Cooper warned that the legislation would make it difficult for women to receive reproductive health care and could lead to clinics closing. The law is set to go into effect on July 1.

Cooper stated that the new law "will effectively ban many abortions altogether, because of the obstacles that they have created for women, for clinics and for doctors."

In addition to the ban after 12 weeks, the falsely named "Care for Women, Children and Families Act" introduces other barriers to abortion such as mandatory wait times and follow-up visits, the banning of abortions via prescription medicines like mifepristone (which account for the majority of abortions in the US) past 10 weeks. Abortions between 10 and 12 weeks would have to be surgical, and the few abortions permitted after 12 weeks would have to take place in a hospital.

Exceptions do exist in the law for rape or incest, putting the limit at 20 weeks, and 24 weeks for "life-limited" fetal anomalies including some physical or genetic disorders, as well as an exception if the life of the mother is at risk.

Abortion access was already limited in the state with only 14 abortion clinics in the state of over 10 million people. This will further complicate women's health in addition to the already difficult situation in regard to obstetrician access and inability to access health care due to poverty. These social conditions have caused maternal death rates to soar in the US, making women four times more likely to die during pregnancy than comparable countries such as Germany, France or

Britain, 10 times more likely than Scandinavian countries, and twice as likely as China.

South Carolina, whose state government is dominated by the Republicans, is moving towards a near-total abortion ban at six weeks, down from its previous 22-week abortion limit.

North and South Carolina are, or at least until the passage of the bill, the last two states in the southeastern United States which provided abortion services, serving as an access point for residents of neighboring states. Much of the southern US as a whole has banned or severely restricted abortion already. With the latest bans in the Carolinas, women in the region will be further deprived of abortion rights, especially poor and working class people who can neither afford travel costs nor the risk of losing their jobs as a result of missing working days traveling out of the region.

The critical vote enabling the override was furnished by State Representative Tricia Cotham, who was elected as a Democrat to the 112th district in Mecklenburg County (Charlotte). Cotham announced she was switching parties to Republican in April. Cotham's electoral promise to defend abortion she made as a Democrat proved as worthless as the rest of the Democratic Party's electoral promises. At least four Republicans ran on abortion rights platforms which they later repudiated through their vote for the ban. This followed a pathetic campaign by Democrats to appeal to these lawmakers, led by Cooper.

Doug Heye, former Republican National Committee communications director, who consulted on three Republican US senate campaigns in the state told *The New York Times* that the Republicans were "feeling this issue out for what's acceptable to the broader public ... Legislatively, they're on offense, but politically, they're on defense."

This comment points to the lack of any real popular support and the crucial role played by the Democrats in smothering opposition to attacks on democratic rights—such as a woman’s right abortion—that permits such a situation to persist where a widely unpopular far-right party is able to dictate widely unpopular policies.

Indeed, in North Carolina most residents wanted to see the right to abortion stay the way it was or be expanded, with little over a third wanting further restrictions or bans, according to a recent Meredith College poll.

The law follows a Florida de facto ban of abortion after six weeks—typically too little time to identify a pregnancy—made alongside an expansion of the death penalty. Similarly, a reactionary religious bigot and anti-abortion Texas judge banned the abortion pill mifepristone, with the Supreme Court staying the ban at the request of the Biden administration. It is expected that the case will end up before the same justices who overturned *Roe v. Wade*, an action which led to the wave of abortion bans that are sweeping the country.

The Democrats are cynically using the overturn of abortion rights by the far-right Republicans, and the overwhelming popular support for abortion rights, to bolster their 2024 elections campaigns.

“Forward is the only way ahead, but I know one thing for certain, standing in the way of progress right now is this Republican supermajority legislature that only took 48 hours to turn the clock back 50 years on women’s health,” Cooper said in a “veto rally” in Raleigh on Saturday.

Biden’s press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre released a perfunctory statement saying the law is a “dangerous bill that is out of touch with the majority of North Carolinians and will make it even more difficult for women to get the reproductive health care they need” and calling for votes for Democrats that would supposedly facilitate restoring *Roe* protections.

Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973 by the Supreme Court. Since then, the Democrats have done nothing to codify it into law. Their claim that if elected in 2024 that they will be either willing or able to defend abortion rights is preposterous.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in its April 10 Perspective statement on the judicial attacks on access to the abortion pill mifepristone:

The response of the White House has been to comply with these judicial outrages, rather than challenging them and exposing the process as illegitimate. Biden and the Democratic Party have no concern over the hundreds of thousands of working class women who will be denied the simplest and least risky procedure for accessing abortion, and who may soon be denied any access at all.

The privileged upper middle class layer that constitutes the social basis of the Democratic Party, along with Wall Street and the Pentagon, will be able to access abortion services, through private resources or travel to another country if necessary, regardless of the legal counterrevolution being pursued by the ultra-right in the United States.



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