



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 31, 2023

Meet the GOP's "New Pro-life Agenda": Contraceptives, Medicaid, Sex Ed

More birth control, Medicaid and sex education. It sounds like the Democratic Party platform. But in reality, these policy priorities are on the list of Republicans in several states, where the GOP hopes to rebrand its pro-life stance to appease critics who say opposition to abortion should go hand-in-hand with more support for children and parents.

This is the direction Republican governors and lawmakers are [taking in half a dozen states](#) they control — Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

In Iowa, for example, Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds supports legislation that would make it legal for pharmacists to sell hormonal contraceptives without requiring a prescription. Indiana and Oklahoma are doing the same.



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Jessica Garvin is an Oklahoma state senator who sponsored two bills related to birth control this year, both of which passed the Senate last week. She told *Politico*:

The most important thing for people to realize is we need to be pro-life and not just pro-birth. That means investing in our families. That means taking a more meaningful approach to policy and forget about the politics. Let that go out the window and let's actually do things that help people have successful families. If we're going to say we can't have abortion for women in Oklahoma, what are we going to do to help support these women that can't have an abortion?

One of Garvin's bills would do what Reynolds is pushing in Iowa — allow pharmacists to dispense birth control without a prescription. Her other bill clarifies that the state's ban on abortion does not ban access to contraceptives. Both proposals made it through with widespread bipartisan support in the Senate, which has a Republican supermajority.

For Garvin, the repeal of *Roe v. Wade* and return to the states the power to decide abortion opened up the need to address these issues, while also opening up the eyes of male Republican lawmakers who formerly didn't realize these problems existed.

"I think the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* has forced the issue to become more of a dinner table conversation, and people are more open about sex and family planning, and I think those are becoming more of conversation pieces within families, and it's a good thing," said Garvin.



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Indiana is considering similar legislation; such a bill cleared the state House in February.

In Mississippi and Wyoming, Republicans have rallied behind expanding Medicaid for postpartum women.

Politico notes:

In Mississippi, [Gov. Tate] Reeves, who is up for reelection this year, announced his support for the policy in February after refusing to endorse it for months, calling it a part of the “new pro-life agenda” and saying that Republicans may have to do things that make them “philosophically uncomfortable” in the post-*Roe* era.

In Wyoming, legislation extending postpartum benefits passed by slim margins in the House and Senate — and legislative leaders in both houses attempted to kill the bill at multiple points during the session. Both GOP lawmakers supportive of the bill and the governor’s office pitched the proposal during hearings and debate on the bill as “pro-life.”

Florida’s executive branch is similarly taking measures to expand Medicaid benefits, although their efforts predate the GOP’s push to restrict abortion in the state. Florida passed a 15-week ban on abortions last year, and the Legislature will take up a six-week ban during this year’s legislative session.

In the Sunshine State, the Department of Health asked for an additional \$12.6 million for its budget in order to provide postpartum telehealth to racial minorities under its Closing the Gap program.

In South Carolina and Indiana, meanwhile, Republican legislators have introduced bills that replace the current abstinence-based sex-education status quo with “comprehensive” sex ed that would be taught in public schools in grades 5 or 6.

“If we want to reduce unwanted pregnancies and, by that, reduce the number of abortions, we need to do a better job of providing factually correct scientific information that’s age appropriate,” said South Carolina state Sen. Tom Davis, who has introduced the sex-education plan in his state’s Legislature.

These plans, however, have yet to gain wide support in their respective states.

Although these different initiatives are in alignment with what Democrats have demanded for years, many on the left are still unsatisfied.

“This has been a long time effort specifically led by Black women in the legislature,” Florida Democratic Rep. Anna Eskamani told *Politico*. “Republicans are trying to give off the impression that they’re championing issues for women and families while they strip away our bodily autonomy and rights.”

Jamila Taylor, president and CEO of the National WIC Association, similarly said: “So yes, we are pleased with some of the progress that we’re seeing even in red states, but that’s never going to replace the need or, quite frankly, our fight to ensure abortion rights in this country.”

In short, as many conservatives have understood all along, the Left was never sincere when they shouted “hypocrites!” and said “if you’re really pro-life, you should do x, y and z!”

Now that Republicans are poised to do exactly what Democrats wanted, the Left still isn’t happy. Why? Because all of those arguments were never anything more than excuses to keep their cherished abortion. They won’t be happy until and unless unlimited abortion is legal everywhere.



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