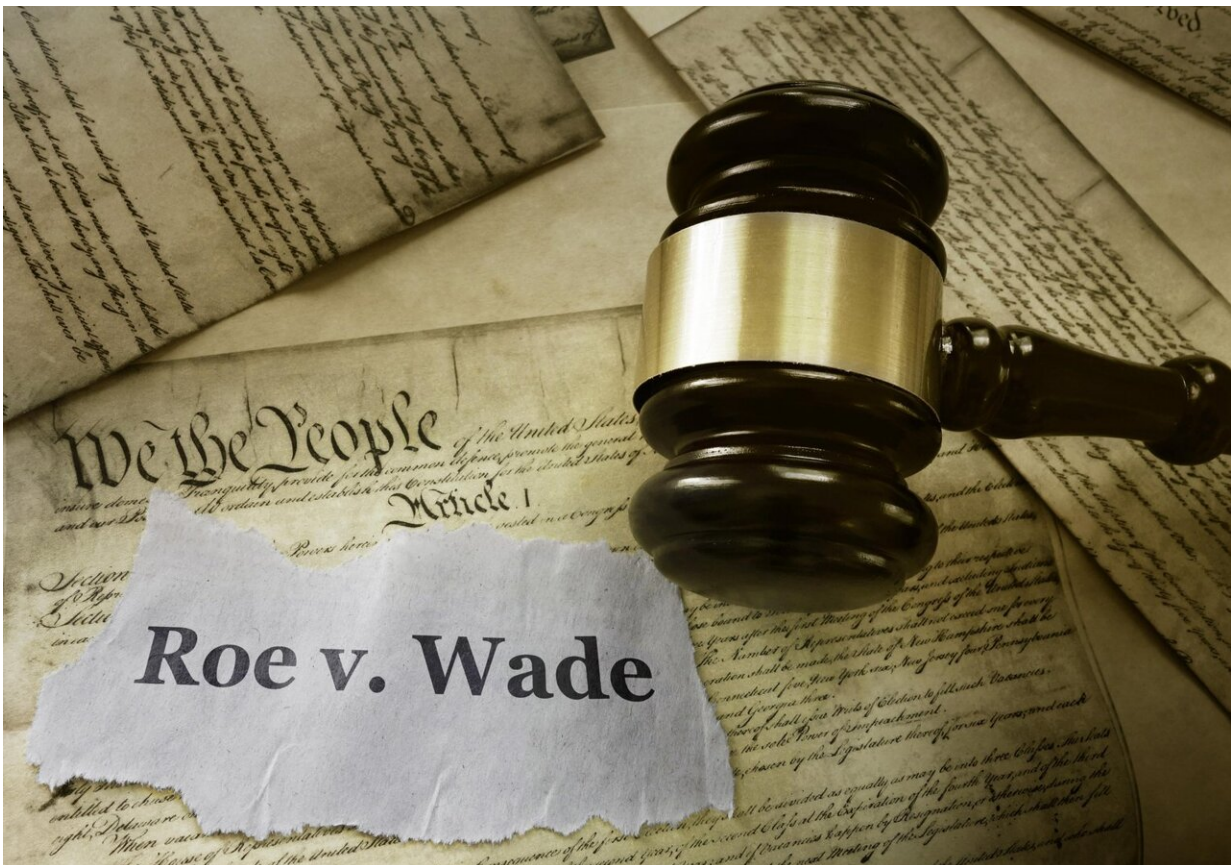


Biden administration takes new steps to ensure access to abortion

January 22 2024, by Robin Foster



On what would have been the 51st anniversary of the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling, the Biden Administration has announced new measures it

will take to further protect a woman's access to abortion.

"Fifty-one years ago today, the Supreme Court recognized a woman's [constitutional right](#) to make deeply personal decisions with her doctor—free from the interference of politicians. Then, a year and a half ago, the [Supreme] Court made the extreme decision to overturn Roe and take away a constitutional right," President Joe Biden said in a [statement](#).

"As a result, tens of millions of women now live in states with extreme and dangerous [abortion](#) bans... In states across the country, women are being turned away from emergency rooms, forced to go to court to seek permission for the [medical attention](#) they need, and made to travel hundreds of miles for health care," he added.

The new measures announced by the White House are multi-pronged: First, [federal agencies](#) will issue guidance to help make free contraceptives more available under the Affordable Care Act and to expand contraception access for federal employees. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will also send letters to health insurers instructing them of their obligation to provide free birth control, the White House said in a [news release](#).

The HHS has also created a new team that will enforce its interpretation of a law known as the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), which the Biden administration has said requires hospitals to provide emergency abortions nationwide, including in the 21 states where the procedure is now limited or banned.

"No American who believes in freedom should accept that women today have fewer rights to choose their health care than their mothers had 51 years ago," HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said in an agency [news release](#).

"Abortion is health care. Contraception is health care. And [health care](#) decisions should be made by a patient with her doctor, not by politicians," he added. "The Biden-Harris Administration is steadfast in the fight for reproductive freedom for all."

As part of the administration's new initiative, Biden will gather with senior officials for a meeting of his reproductive health task force on Monday, where he will be joined by several physicians who have practiced in states with abortion bans, the White House said.

The latest actions are part of Democrats' continuing effort to focus on an issue that is popular with voters: Fifty-eight percent of all voters, including about one in five Republicans, trust Democrats more than Republicans on abortion, according to a [November poll](#) conducted by KFF, a [health](#) policy organization.

"Where abortion has been on the ballot, the American people have overwhelmingly voted to protect reproductive freedom," Jennifer Klein, director of the White House's Gender Policy Council, told reporters last week, the *Washington Post* reported.

She pointed to states such as Kansas and Ohio where voters last year sided with measures protecting abortion rights, the *Post* reported.

In addition to the measures announced Monday, Biden officials have said they are continuing to work with Congress to enact legislation that would guarantee a national right to abortion.

"As we've been really clear, the president, the vice president, everyone in the administration, the number one priority for all of us is working to pass a federal law that will restore the protections that were lost when Roe was overturned," Klein said.

More information: The Center for Reproductive Rights has more on [abortion access](#).

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