

Iowa top court rules US state's six-week abortion ban can stand

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Iowa's highest court on Friday upheld the US state's six-week abortion ban, two years after the federal right to the procedure was overturned and with the topic a key issue in the US presidential election.

Last year, an Iowa judge placed an injunction on the state's new law banning nearly all abortions after six weeks, the point at which a fetal heartbeat can be detected, after Planned Parenthood and others sued.

In a four to three ruling, the Midwestern state's Supreme Court on Friday reversed the injunction, meaning the ban which takes effect before some women even realize they are pregnant, now stands.

The back-and-forth comes as the explosive topic of abortion figures prominently in the presidential campaigning between President Joe Biden, a Democrat, and his Republican opponent, Donald Trump.

Abortion regulation was placed in the hands of the states following the US Supreme Court's June 2022 decision overturning the historic Roe v. Wade ruling that had protected abortion rights nationally.

Calling Iowa's ban "extreme and dangerous" Biden said in a statement that "women in every state must have the right to make deeply personal decisions about their health."

"This should never happen in America. Yet, this is exactly what is happening in states across the country since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade," Biden said.

The United States, already politically polarized, is now split between the states that have banned or significantly restricted access to the procedure—and those that have adopted new protections for a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.

In Iowa, writing for the state's Supreme Court majority, Justice Matthew McDermott said that "a right to an abortion, as the historical record shows, is not rooted at all in our state's history and tradition."

In a dissenting opinion, Chief Justice Susan Christensen countered that the "majority's rigid approach relies heavily on the male-dominated history and traditions of the 1800s," and that it ignored "how far women's rights have come."

Iowa's ban makes exceptions for cases of rape or incest and in the event of medical emergencies for the mother.

Some 20 US states have banned or restricted access to abortion, including medication abortion, since the Supreme Court's ruling.

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