

SUPREME COURT STRIKES DOWN ROE V. WADE

Oregon Democrats vow to protect access to abortion

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The Oregonian

The governors of Oregon, Washington state and California signed on to a commitment Friday to reproductive freedom, making the West Coast's three states a safe haven for anyone seeking abortions after the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday struck down Roe v. Wade.

In Oregon, pregnant people's access to abortion, whether by prescription or surgery, is expected to remain broadly available, including being covered by the Oregon Health Plan and free to undocumented immigrants, due to previous decisions by the Legislature.

Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan immediately reacted to the news by reminding people that abortion is still legal in Oregon.

"It is still your right," Fagan said. "You can travel to Oregon to get an abortion if you need to."

While Democrats across the state quickly took to social media to condemn the decision, some Oregon Republicans welcomed the news, praising the Supreme Court.

Oregon's Democrat House Speaker Dan Rayfield said, "this will go down as an incredibly dark day in American history," while Oregon Republican congressional candidate Lori Chavez-DeRemer said she hopes this decision will now allow Oregon Republican leaders to change the easy access to abortion services in the state.

Tina Kotek, Oregon's Democratic candidate for governor and former House Speaker, said she is "furious" at the Supreme Court decision and "deeply concerned for women around the country."

"As your governor, and the only candidate with the support of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, Pro-Choice Oregon and The Mother PAC, I will stand up to fight for reproductive freedom. That's a promise."

Kotek reminded voters that reproductive freedom is on the ballot in Oregon this year, highlighting the past voting records of her opponents Republican candidate Christine Drazen and independent candidate Betsy Johnson.

Drazen released a short statement reaffirming her support for anti-abortion laws.

"Despite the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, Oregon will continue to have among the most extreme abortion laws in the country and around the world," Drazen said. "As governor, I will stand up for life by vetoing legislation designed to push Oregon further outside the mainstream."

In the past, Drazen has supported a measure to block funding for abortion access and sponsored legislation to criminalize abortion providers.

Johnson reaffirmed her support for abortion rights in Oregon saying she is pro-choice and that "this is a bedrock issue for me, and frankly, for Oregon. A fundamental right. As Oregon's independent governor, I will always defend and protect a woman's right to choose."

Kotek said the stakes for Oregon's race for governor are crystal clear: "We can't let extremists take us backward," she said.

The Supreme Court's decision on Friday ended constitutional protections for abortion that had stood in America for nearly a half-century. The decision by the court's conservative majority is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states.



U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat, speaks as she joins abortion rights activists as they demonstrate following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade on Friday.

Jacquelyn Martin/AP Photo

The ruling, unthinkable just a few years ago, was the culmination of decades of efforts by abortion opponents, made possible by an emboldened right side of the court that has been fortified by three appointees of former President Donald Trump.

Both sides predicted the fight over abortion would continue, in state capitals and in Washington, D.C., and Justice Clarence Thomas, part of Friday's majority, called on the court to overturn other high court rulings protecting same-sex marriage, gay sex and the use of contraceptives.

Clinics in at least two states, Wisconsin and West Virginia, stopped performing abortions after Friday's decision.

Abortion foes cheered the ruling, but abortion rights supporters, including President Joe Biden, expressed dismay and pledged to fight to restore the rights.

"It's a sad day for the court and for the country," Biden said at the White House. He urged voters to make it a defining issue in the November elections, declaring, "This decision must not be the final word."

The ruling came more than a month after the stunning leak of a draft opinion by Justice Samuel Alito indicating the court was prepared to take this momentous step.

It puts the court at odds with a majority of Americans who favored preserving Roe, according to opinion polls.

Rayfield said Friday morning that legislative leaders will take action to strengthen and improve laws protecting abortion rights in Oregon during the next legislative session.

"Let's be clear about the stakes: The extreme Dobbs decision will make women and individuals across the country less safe," Rayfield said. "It will harm millions of people, most specifically people of color and low-income individuals, and worsen existing inequality ... However, we will not let our despair at today's decision overwhelm our need to work even harder to protect and expand access to all forms of reproductive health care."

It is extremely unlikely that any new abortion limits would be passed in Oregon, where Democratic majorities in the Legislature and Democratic Gov. Kate Brown in 2017 passed a law that explicitly protects the right to an abortion in the event that the high

court were to overturn Roe. Brown and Kotek have said they view that law among the signature pieces of legislation they championed.

House Bill 5202, passed during the Legislature earlier this year, provided \$15 million to establish what backers named the Oregon Reproductive Equity Fund. The money will be used to help patients in parts of Oregon without easy access to reproductive services obtain abortions by paying for the services as well as logistical help including lodging and travel. It also could be used to fund abortions and associated travel and lodging costs for pregnant people from Idaho and elsewhere.

When a leaked draft of the court's decision allowing states to severely limit access to abortions went public in May, politicians across Oregon responded, with Democrats who hold the reins of power vowing to fight the loss of a constitutional right that has been in place for nearly a half-century.

"This disgraceful Supreme Court decision will undoubtedly put many people's lives at risk, in addition to stripping away a constitutional right that disproportionately affects women and has been settled law for most of our lifetimes," Brown said. "For all the Americans today feeling scared, angry,

and disappointed — for everyone who needs an abortion and does not know where they can access safe reproductive health care — please know you are not alone, and the fight is not over."

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, an Oregon Democrat, condemned the decision.

"The Supreme Court's decision to overturn abortion rights is infuriating, heartbreaking, and dangerous," Bonamici said. "The decision today undermines decades of hard-fought protections for reproductive health and the right to determine when and whether to have a child. Make no mistake, overturning Roe v. Wade will not end abortions; it will make them unsafe."

Bonamici said she helped the House pass legislation to put Roe v. Wade into law in the past and will continue to do the work needed until everyone can access safe abortions again.

"This decision will disproportionately hurt families and individuals who are already struggling, and, unfortunately, it will embolden many states to restrict access to the care people need," she said.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, said the decision marks a betrayal to the American people by the Supreme Court.

"These radical justices have ensured American women today have fewer rights than their grandmothers had decades ago — rights that have proven essential to the health, economic participation and freedom of people to control their own bodies," Wyden said. "To be clear, the anti-abortion movement won't stop here. What's next is the criminalization of abortion — women and doctors in jail, or worse."

Wyden said state and local leaders must take steps to expand access to abortion and protect the people and health care providers from the extremists who are criminalizing it. Wyden said Congress must also pass legislation to protect people's data so their web searches, text messages and location tracking aren't used against them to criminalize their search for abortion.

"This is going to be the fight of our lifetime, and I am all in to do what it takes to protect the right to safe and legal abortion for generations to come," Wyden said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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