



Lessons from the Pro-Life Fight in Arizona

Editor's Note: The *Mindszenty Report* decided to go on the ground to see what is happening in Arizona, where a major battle has shaped up over abortion. We interviewed Olivia Brown, communications director of a pro-life organization, It Goes Too Far, that is battling an initiative on the November ballot that would make abortion on demand a state constitutional right. The fight became more intense in April when the Arizona supreme court upheld an 1864 territorial statute banning all abortions with few exceptions. Arizona's experience may hold lessons for numerous other states now facing campaigns to lock abortion rights into state constitutions.

The editors of the *Mindszenty Report*, not speaking for It Goes Too Far, believe that unless legislation is passed to change the result of the Arizona decision, voters in that state will almost certainly face an all-or-nothing choice between no effective limits on abortion and a near-total ban. The situation is similar in several other states.

We are steadfastly pro-life but fear that such a stark choice for the voters risks a devastating loss for the pro-life side in those states, possibly resulting in a wide-open abortion regime that is even worse than what prevailed before the great 2022 *Dobbs* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court overruling its 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. The politically pragmatic approach for now, in certain states, arguably might be for legislatures to enact more specific, less sweeping bans. As Stephen P. White observed at TheCatholicThing.org in April, "the most prudent way to put principles into practice is by not making the perfect the enemy of the good."

In a future issue the *Mindszenty Report* intends to review the battles in other states over abortion initiatives and legislation, while updating readers on the fight in Arizona.

You are involved in the pro-life movement in the state of Arizona. Could you tell us a little about yourself and your organization?

It Goes Too Far is the official campaign working to defeat the proposed ballot measure in Arizona that would enshrine unregulated and unrestricted abortion in our state constitution. We are a group of individuals with varying views on abortion who came together because we saw how detrimental this abortion amendment would be to the health and safety of women. This ballot measure was written recklessly, and its broad language is deceptive.

I am the spokeswoman and political director for the It Goes Too Far campaign. Since a young age, I have always been enamored with politics because I saw how policy could shape the world and I wanted to be a part of changing the world for the better. When this extreme amendment was introduced as a ballot measure in Arizona, I knew that I needed to be a part of the campaign to defeat it because it would dramatically change Arizonans' lives—for the worse.

I attended Arizona Christian University, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies with a double minor in Political Science and Biblical Studies. Everything that led me to this moment has prepared me for this role as the spokeswoman for our campaign. Every week I speak to local and national media, in

addition to crowds of thousands across Arizona about how radical this amendment truly is.

At a simple glance, the average voter wouldn't know that the measure would remove the requirement for a qualified doctor, eliminate common-sense safety standards for abortions, shut out parents when their minor daughter needs them the most, and allow for painful late-term abortion, opposed by 70 percent of voters. The goal of the It Goes Too Far campaign is to educate as many people as possible about the devastating impacts that this ballot measure will have in Arizona if it is passed.

What does the current fight over abortion look like in Arizona? Arizona is considered a battleground state for the 2024 U.S. presidential race. The abortion issue might play a critical role in this election. There is a campaign to place an initiative on the ballot for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing unlimited abortion in the Arizona constitution. Could you tell us about this amendment and why it goes too far?

Late last year, abortion activists formed Arizona for Abortion Access and filed the "**Arizona Abortion Access Act**," which is a proposed state constitutional amendment to add a fundamental right to abortion. This is a ballot initiative and the proponents must file 383,923 valid signatures of registered voters by July 3 in order to qualify to be on the November 5, 2024 Arizona ballot.

The proponents of this amendment are making false claims. This amendment goes way beyond codifying *Roe v. Wade* in our state constitution. In an effort to expand abortion, proponents have put forward a ballot measure with extreme consequences for Arizonans. They are seeking to change Arizona's constitution to guarantee a right to unregulated and unrestricted abortion.

When you read the language with a legal eye, the consequences are clear. It says that any government entity would be unable to "enact any laws or regulations that deny, restrict or interfere" with what they call a "fundamental right" to abortion. This

slashes common-sense safety standards and precautions in place to save women's lives, like requiring an ultrasound which is needed to detect an ectopic pregnancy. By removing the requirement of informed consent, it would rob women of the chance to know the risks of an abortion before getting one. These risks include a perforated uterus, hemorrhaging, infection from an incomplete abortion, and even being unable to have a family in the future.

It would diminish parental rights by eliminating parental notification and consent for a minor to get an abortion. It would shut moms and dads out of their minor daughter's biggest life decision. Because there is a line in the amendment that forbids any penalty for someone who "aids" or "assists" a woman getting an abortion, it could allow for minor girls to be taken advantage of by abusive power figures or sex traffickers, who wouldn't even be punished by law for taking a girl to obtain an abortion to cover up their crime. Imagine your 14-year-old daughter being taken by her abusive soccer coach to get an abortion, without consequences and without your ever knowing. That is what could happen if this ballot measure passes.

Currently, Arizona law mandates that a doctor must be the one to provide an abortion. But this amendment takes the doctor out of the doctor-patient relationship by removing the requirement for a qualified medical doctor. The ballot language changes the verbiage of who is allowed to provide or sign off on an abortion from "doctor" to "treating health care professional."

Under Arizona Statute 32-301, a "healthcare professional" includes dietitians, homeopathic providers, chiropractors, massage therapists and more. A simple approval by their particular boards would clear the way. We agree it sounds crazy, but that's how the amendment is written. That is NOT taking girls' and women's health and safety seriously. You can read the analysis of the language for yourself at ItGoesTooFar.com.

What is the current status of abortion law in Arizona? How would the amendment change this law? What are some legal ramifications if the voters pass the amendment?

As of this interview in mid-April, abortion is legal in Arizona up to 15 weeks—which is nearly four months. When *Roe* was overruled in 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court returned the issue of abortion policy to the states. In Arizona, there was a pre-*Roe* law that was in effect until the 1970s, which allowed abortion only in the event that the life of the mother was in jeopardy. When *Roe* was decided, the pre-*Roe* law became unenforceable, but it was never repealed. Before *Roe* was overruled, the Arizona legislature passed a 15-week limit that was signed into law in 2022.

The issue of which law stands (the 15-week limit or the pre-*Roe* law) is before the Arizona supreme court right now. On April 9, that court determined that the 2022 bill setting the 15-week limit did not take precedence over the pre-*Roe* law. A temporary stay was issued, during which Planned Parenthood can decide to take up litigation or request a lengthened stay. This means that the 15-week limit is still in effect until the stay is ended.

There are major legal ramifications if the proposed ballot measure passes. The measure endangers current law that allows health care professionals to opt out of performing or participating in abortions due to their consciences. The amendment would erase the religious freedoms of Christian health care providers, by forcing them to perform abortions on patients regardless of their deeply held beliefs.

It is important to note that, although state statutes can be fixed by the legislature, lawmakers wouldn't be able to make fixes to a voter-protected, constitutional amendment. We would be stuck with this reckless abortion amendment and all its consequences including stripping away safety standards and shutting out parents from the process.

How important do you think the abortion issue will be in Arizona? How key is the 2024 election here in Arizona for the rights of the unborn?

Abortion will be a top issue in Arizona this year. Ballot measures often bring out voters who don't typically cast a ballot, including people who may not see themselves as political but want to vote no because the extreme

nature of this amendment goes against all their deeply held beliefs. We are seeing Democrats, Republicans and independents share with us how this amendment crosses the line for them.

If this amendment passes in 2024, it will affect the rights of every person. No woman wants to be put at risk and no parent wants a minor daughter put at risk, especially when parents would be kept in the dark under this amendment. Women in Michigan likely didn't expect to lose their common-sense safety standards when they passed a similar amendment there last year. But now the Michigan legislature is tearing down reasonable standards for clinics and abortion procedures, and it just voted to allow late-term partial birth abortion.

The majority of voters support significant limits on abortion. They do *not* support unrestricted and unregulated abortion permanently placed in our state constitution. The data back this up. A Marist poll across every age range reported that 79 percent of voters support limits on abortion. Another poll that specifically surveyed ages 18-34 found that 7 of every 10 young voters support limits on abortion.

The proposed amendment would allow for painful late-term abortions to be legalized with nothing but the approval of the abortionist, who doesn't have to be a qualified doctor. A Gallup poll found late-term abortion is opposed by 70 percent of voters. The data are clear: This amendment goes beyond what voters support, and it removes sensible safeguards to protect women and girls. Proponents are not being truthful with voters about how extreme this amendment really is.

Who are the forces behind this movement? Do you have more details?

This ballot measure is well funded by national groups whose goal is to pass constitutional amendments state by state until they have unrestricted and unregulated abortion in every corner of the country. These groups include Planned Parenthood Advocates of Arizona, ACLU of Arizona, Affirm Sexual and Reproductive Health, Arizona List and Healthcare Rising Arizona.

These are groups that stand to profit financially if the amendment passes. Planned Parenthood shares on its website that chemical abortion pills cost up to \$800 and surgical abortions cost up to \$2,000.

This amendment would allow Planned Parenthood to send abortion pills through the mail with a virtual consultation, which the organization is already doing in states with lax abortion legislation. A major risk of having only a virtual consultation is that the provider—who doesn't even have to be a medical doctor—will not be giving the woman an ultrasound prior to her receiving the abortion pill. An ultrasound is currently required to confirm the gestational age and size of the fetus, and to detect an ectopic pregnancy. If a woman has an ectopic pregnancy when taking the abortion pill, it can be life-threatening, and the woman could die. In addition, the FDA only allows the abortion pill up to 10 weeks. If a woman takes the abortion pill past that gestational age, the abortion may not be fully effective.

A doctor is needed to ensure that the chemical abortion pill is taken as directed, because if it is not complete, the woman can suffer serious infection. Another risk associated with getting medication abortion pills online is that they could be counterfeit or unsafe if not from a reputable source. All of these complications can be avoided with the oversight of a qualified medical doctor. As a young woman, I think it is terrifying to see how the health and safety of women would be undermined in an effort to expand abortion.

What other states have similar proposals?

Besides Arizona, there are over a dozen other states that could have abortion on the ballot in November, including Missouri, Maryland, New York, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Florida, Nebraska, Arkansas and Nevada. Unlike states such as Missouri where

abortion is not allowed at any stage of pregnancy, Arizona women currently have nearly 4 months to terminate their pregnancy for any reason [though the April 9 state supreme court decision described earlier could end up eliminating that 4-month window]. Again, the majority of voters support limits on abortion.

How are pro-life activists in Arizona responding to this initiative campaign?

It Goes Too Far is leading an educational campaign sharing with voters across the state what the amendment really does and why we must reject it. Across the state, brave people are stepping up to tell voters the truth about this amendment. We are at farmers markets, libraries, fairs and more. Our goal is to educate as many voters as possible because when we educate people, we win. We are confident Arizona voters will reject this amendment when they are armed with the facts.

We have many generous supporters from various political perspectives who find common ground on how dangerous this amendment would be for Arizona. We have supporters who vote Democrat, Republican and independent, and are stepping up to help us defeat this amendment because it crosses the line for them. Arizona has a large Hispanic population, so we have all of our materials and website translated into Spanish. Our Director of Hispanic Engagement works alongside bilingual volunteers to ensure we are reaching as many voters as possible.

Additionally, we're partnering with community groups and churches of every faith and denomination so that they can share this information in their places of worship. It is critical that people of faith engage at the ballot box.

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