

The first year without *Roe v. Wade*: How abortion access has shifted in Illinois and beyond

By Angie Leventis Lourgos | June 23, 2023

One year ago, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the landmark 1973 decision *Roe v. Wade*, reversing nearly a half-century of federal abortion rights protections and leaving the matter up to individual states.

Roughly half of all states in the nation — primarily in the Midwest and South — moved to either ban or severely restrict abortion. But Illinois had approved strong reproductive rights protections, declaring abortion a “fundamental right” in the 2019 Reproductive Health Act. Abortion providers in Illinois have reported an unprecedented surge in patients traveling from other states to terminate pregnancies here, as abortion access dwindled in large sections of the country.

Here are some key events in the ever-changing reproductive rights landscape over the last year:

June 24, 2022 — Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*

In a 5-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling that guaranteed abortion rights nationwide. The high court also votes 6-3 to uphold a Mississippi abortion restriction in the case at hand, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. Protests and rallies — for and against the end of federal abortion protections — erupt in Chicago and across the country.

Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League, predicts that Illinois will “become an abortion mecca, by design.” “My one ray of hope for Illinois is that the impact will be so visible that the people will push back against the extreme abortion regime in our state,” he says.

July 14, 2022 — Planned Parenthood of Illinois & Wisconsin announce partnership

Planned Parenthood of Illinois announces that Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin clinicians will be traveling across statelines to provide abortions in Illinois, amid a tenfold surge in Wisconsin patients coming to Illinois for abortion care post-Roe, according to the agency.

July 19, 2022 — U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky arrested while protesting

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Evanston, and other Democratic members of Congress are arrested for obstructing a street outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington while protesting the decision to overturn Roe. “Today, I am making good trouble,” Schakowsky tweeted above a video clip of her being led away by police.

July 24, 2022 — One month post-Roe, 11 states ban or severely restrict abortion

One month after Roe’s demise, 11 states in the Midwest and South have either banned abortion in nearly all cases or were enforcing a roughly six-week gestational limit on terminating a pregnancy, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights. Before the Supreme Court overturned Roe, these states had a total of 71 abortion clinics; a month later, there were only 28 still offering abortion services.

Sept. 7, 2022 — Choix offers ‘advance provision’ abortion pills

Choix, an online telemedicine provider, begins offering abortion pills to patients who aren’t pregnant in Illinois and several other states. The service called “advance provision” allows patients to keep the medications on hand for future use.

Sept. 14, 2022 — Champaign’s Planned Parenthood location expands

The day before Indiana is scheduled to begin enforcing a near-total abortion ban, Planned Parenthood of Illinois announces that it renovated its health center in Champaign, expanding the size of the clinic by 5,000 square feet; the clinic also begins offering procedures in addition to medication abortion.



“We anticipated Indiana residents losing access to abortion care, so we decided to expand our care in Champaign,” the agency said in a statement.

Sept. 15, 2022 — Indiana’s near-total abortion ban takes effect

A near-total abortion ban takes effect in Indiana, the first state to pass this kind of measure since Roe was overturned. But the law is blocked by the courts a week later amid legal challenges, and abortions are permitted to resume.

Oct. 2, 2022 — Over 60 clinics close or cease offering abortions

A hundred days after the fall of Roe, more than 60 abortion clinics across 15 states have either closed or ceased offering abortions, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

Oct. 3, 2022 — Planned Parenthood affiliate announces mobile clinic

A Planned Parenthood affiliate in Southern Illinois announces plans for a mobile abortion clinic. The retrofitted 37-foot recreational vehicle will be designed to travel along the state border to help reach out-of-state patients and decrease wait times, according to Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri.

Oct. 11, 2022 — Choices opens abortion clinic in Carbondale

Memphis-based provider Choices: Center for Reproductive Health opens an abortion clinic in Carbondale, in the wake of a near-total abortion ban in Tennessee.

“The new clinic location is approximately a three-hour drive from Memphis and Nashville and is a stop on the Amtrak line,” the provider says in a statement. “Illinois is the closest state to Tennessee that will retain the right to abortion.”

November 2022 — Alamo Clinic relocates to Carbondale

Alamo Women’s Clinic relocates from Oklahoma to Carbondale; three doctors travel from Montana, Tennessee and Texas to provide abortions there.

December 2022 — Out-of-state abortion patients skyrocket in Illinois

Six months after Roe is overturned, Illinois abortion providers say the number of out-of-state patients has skyrocketed. A Planned Parenthood clinic in Fairview Heights near the Illinois-Missouri border reports a 300% increase in patients coming from states other than Illinois and Missouri since the fall of Roe; nearly half of all patients there are traveling from outside the bi-state region.

January 2023 — Abortion clinic opens near Illinois-Wisconsin border

A Wisconsin doctor opens an abortion clinic in Rockford, amid protests. The Rockford Family Planning Center offers medication abortions.

Jan. 13, 2023 — Pritzker signs law safeguarding abortion protections in Illinois

Gov. J.B. Pritzker signs sweeping abortion legislation, expanding the pool of providers and increasing protections for health care workers and traveling patients.

“We’ve seen out-of-state patients who’ve been denied their rights in other states coming to Illinois for abortion care,” said Pritzker. “Our clinics have been doing their best to serve the people seeking to exercise their rights, but they’ve been overwhelmed.”

Jan. 15, 2023 — Man allegedly sets fire to Planned Parenthood clinic in Peoria

Authorities respond to a fire just before midnight at the Planned Parenthood Health Center in Peoria. An Illinois man — who later pleads guilty to setting the fire — is accused of smashing a window at the abortion clinic and placing a Molotov cocktail inside. He allegedly tells investigators that if the fire caused “a little delay” in a patient receiving services his conduct might have been “all worth it,” according to federal authorities. The fire causes more than a million dollars in damage to the building and temporarily shuts down the health center, according to Planned Parenthood of Illinois.

Jan. 19, 2023 — FBI offers reward for information in attacks against many anti-abortion pregnancy centers nationwide

The Federal Bureau of Investigation offers a \$25,000 reward for information in a series of attacks against reproductive health service facilities across the country, most of which are anti-abortion pregnancy centers or other organizations opposing abortion. Some of the attacks involve arson, threatening messages and other forms of vandalism, according to FBI photos and descriptions.

Jan. 22, 2023 — 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*

The nation commemorates the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the first since the landmark case was overturned. Chicago-area abortion critics held prayer vigils and attend the national March for Life rally in Washington in the days leading up to the milestone. Abortion rights advocates mark the day with marches, rallies and protests against abortion restrictions.

“Today, instead of commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*, we are acknowledging that last year, the Supreme Court took away a constitutional right from the American people,” President Joe Biden says in a statement.

February 2023 — Equity Clinic opens in Champaign

An Ohio-based physician opens Equity Clinic, a roughly 6,000-square-foot abortion clinic, in Champaign.

“This is my purpose,” Dr. Keith Reisinger-Kindle, founder and medical director of Equity Clinic, told the Tribune. “Every single (patient) we saw, the second they’re leaving this building, their life is changed. Completely.”

April 2023 — Courts battle over federal approval of abortion pill

The future of a popular abortion pill, mifepristone, hangs in the balance nationwide after a Trump-appointed Texas judge orders a hold on federal approval of the medication, which the Food and Drug Administration had permitted for use in the United States since 2000.

Many states begin stockpiling abortion medications. But the U.S. Supreme Court later that month preserves access to mifepristone, rejecting lower court restrictions, as the lawsuit continues.

May 2, 2023 — Danville City Council approves ban on mailing abortion pills

The City Council in Danville narrowly approves a controversial ordinance that banned the mailing and shipping of abortion pills, after an Indiana abortion provider purchased property in the central Illinois community. State leaders say the ordinance is not legal in Illinois. Hundreds of demonstrators — for and against abortion access filled the meeting, which featured heated public comment on the matter.

May 20, 2023 — Man allegedly tries to set fire to prospective abortion clinic downtown

A driver rams his car into a planned abortion clinic in Danville, allegedly intending to set the structure on fire, according to federal authorities. The driver — who cited his opposition to abortion to investigators — is charged with attempted arson, according to a criminal complaint.

June 2023 — Planned Parenthood of Illinois reports more than 50% increase in abortions in a year

Planned Parenthood of Illinois reports a 54% increase in abortions since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. During that year, nearly a quarter of patients traveled from out-of-state compared with 7% when *Roe* was still intact, according to the agency.

Thirteen states — including neighboring Missouri and Kentucky — are enforcing an abortion ban and a half-dozen states also have strict gestational limits, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Abortion also remains unavailable in Wisconsin due to 19th century laws barring pregnancy termination.

Approximately 25 million women of childbearing age living in states where abortion access is more restricted now than it was a year ago.

June 24, 2023 — Abortion rallies in Chicago mark a year post-*Roe*

The Pro-Life Action League hosts a Rally for Life at Federal Plaza in Chicago to “celebrate the first anniversary of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.” Meanwhile, just across the street at 219 S. Dearborn St., reproductive rights advocates rally a counterprotest called “WE Must Control Our Bodies!” co-sponsored by Chicago for Abortion Rights, the Chicago Abortion Fund and about 10 other organizations.

Aside from cross talk between both sides, the event remains peaceful as dozens of police cars line the street outside, separating the groups. ■

