



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on January 5, 2024

Why Democrats' Abortion Victories May Not Translate to Election Wins

Democrats have recently been celebrating their success on abortion ballot initiatives and taking this as a sign that they're on track for a blue wave in November, but some analysts are saying that they shouldn't get too confident.

Per an analysis by [Politico](#), five abortion-related ballot measures that have come up since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 were successful because they had the electoral support of Republican voters. However, these Republicans voted for GOP candidates in races decided at the same time as the ballot initiatives — and they're unlikely to jump ship for Democrats anytime soon.



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Moreover, Democratic turnout did not go up in states with abortion referendums in comparison to those states without them. In fact, Democrats who were on the ballot at the same time as the abortion referendums lost their races. All this pokes a hole in the recently popular narrative that abortion will be a galvanizing issue leading to a consequential spike in Democrat turnout.

John LaBombard is a political operative who has worked with Democrats in red states, including Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona (who has now switched to independent). He told *Politico*: "It would be unwise for candidates in either party to think that an abortion-rights ballot initiative will automatically determine who wins or loses a race. On the margins, ballot initiatives can help illuminate differences between the candidates — even in deeply red states where voters are increasingly likely to vote based on partisanship. But voters can view them separately from the initiative itself."

Democrats currently have their sights set on about a dozen states in which they hope to place abortion on the ballot, including Florida, Nevada, and Arizona. And Joe Biden has stated he plans to make access to abortion a major rallying point of his reelection campaign.

One political consultant, former Arizona Republican state Senator Stan Barnes, gave his opinion that while having abortion on the ballot won't be decisive, it has the potential to hurt the GOP. "It's not necessarily a death knell for Republicans but it is a net negative," Barnes said. "The ballot measure drives the point and it compels candidates to take a position, and that can be a difficult thing to do for a pro-life candidate because most people want some sort of legal abortion right."

Democrats are pushing to get abortion on the ballot across the board, regardless of particular state laws. They want to legalize it in states where it is illegal or extremely restricted; they want to expand the practice in states with pro-abortion laws.

For instance, *Politico* notes Democrats' approach in New York and Florida, two states with contrasting abortion laws:



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In New York, for example, left-leaning groups are pushing an amendment protecting abortion rights as part of an explicit strategy to boost Democratic turnout and swing key congressional races in 2024. The plan came on the heels of disastrous midterms for New York Democrats that fueled the GOP's success in flipping the House.

And in Florida, progressive groups are scrambling to gather enough signatures by February to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would nullify the state's 15-week and 6-week abortion bans.

The analysts say that the success of abortion in recent ballot initiatives has been the result of crossover votes from Republicans; however, this has not necessarily translated to more votes for Democratic candidates.

Ohio is one state in which a pro-abortion ballot initiative won thanks to support from Republicans, who made up a greater share of the vote than did Democrats. Even in deep blue California, the 66.9 percent of voters who approved the most recent pro-abortion constitutional amendment in 2022 was 7 points higher than the reelection majority won by Gavin Newsom. In fact, Democratic turnout was low in that race, leading to losses down the ballot.

In yet another example, Kentucky voters last year shot down a proposed amendment that would have restricted abortion. Yet Republican Senator Rand Paul still coasted to reelection by 23 points.

As [The New American](#) has previously reported, major Democratic donors have been reluctant to invest in the abortion fight in Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a 6-week abortion ban that is currently blocked by the court but that could take effect at any moment. Despite this, the pro-abortion group Floridians Protecting Freedom has [now surpassed](#) the signature threshold needed to get its measure on the ballot.

Yet conservatives, led by Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody, have already filed a challenge to the proposed initiative on the grounds that it has misleading language attempting to "hoodwink" voters. The Florida Supreme Court, with five of its seven current justices being appointed by DeSantis, is set to hear oral arguments for the case beginning February 7.

Will the abortion issue give Democrats the general election bump they're hoping for? Or will their ambitions fall short come November?



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