

Congressional Attacks on Reproductive Rights (2013)

Recent Congressional Action

The disastrous 2010 elections saw Tea Party extremists flooding into the U.S. Congress. Although they campaigned on economic issues, once in office their first order of business was to begin blocking women's access to abortion care, birth control, and other family planning services. So far they have been unsuccessful, and no nationwide restrictions have been made into law.

U.S. House of Representatives Passes Worst Abortion Ban in Decades

At the federal level, only one restrictive bill has been voted on by the House, but will likely not be taken up by the Senate. Passed by the House (228-196) on June 18, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act (H.R. 1797) directly contravenes *Roe v. Wade* by banning all abortions before viability, at 20 weeks gestation, with only narrow exceptions in cases of officially reported rape or incest, and no protection for pregnant women's health. The bill, which recites the scientifically baseless claim that first and second trimester fetuses feel pain, was introduced by Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) and was co-sponsored by 184 members of the House that included both Republicans and a few Democrats. President Obama has threatened to veto the bill if it makes it to his desk, but it is unlikely that the bill will be taken up in the Democrat-controlled Senate. Unfortunately, legislation very similar to this bill is pending in the Republican-dominated legislatures in both South Carolina and Wisconsin.

GOP Senators Preparing to Push an Abortion Ban After Labor Day

[Senator Lindsey Graham](#) introduced a [20-week abortion ban bill](#) in November 2013. Because abortions at 20 weeks are extremely rare, poorly understood and easily demonized, it seems Graham and the bill's 40 co-sponsors are eager to use the issue to advance their careers. Since the bill was introduced, it has been read twice and remains in committee. President Obama has already threatened a veto, but any vote on the issue could harm Democratic incumbents in Louisiana, North Carolina and Arkansas where state legislators have recently passed restrictive abortion bills.

*This page has been adapted from "War on Women's Reproductive Rights Escalates in the States" from August 2013.
Updated January 2014.*