

Abortion rights prevailed across the country in the midterms

By [Lissandra Villa Huerta](#) Globe Staff, Updated November 9, 2022, 8:25 p.m.



Supporters reacted as preliminary results came in Tuesday in Detroit for Michigan Proposal 3, which enshrined abortion rights into the state constitution. RYAN SUN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Voters delivered victories for abortion rights on ballot questions and in key gubernatorial races across the country on Tuesday as the Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* played a major factor in the midterm elections and helped Democrats stave off an expected Republican sweep in Congress.

Support for abortion rights extended from blue states like Vermont and California

through the Midwestern battleground of Michigan and into deep red areas like Kentucky and Montana, where voters cast ballots on constitutional amendments and referendums.

The results, on top of a Kansas vote this summer defeating a measure that would have paved the way for an abortion ban, confirmed what polls have consistently shown for years — a majority of Americans across party lines believe the procedure should be legal. Now several elections have indicated they care enough to vote that way.

“The voters showed that it’s a very important issue for them this midterm election . . . therefore we have to continue to make sure we’re pushing for reproductive freedom in all the states and at the federal legislature as well for it to be codified,” said Christian F. Nunes, president of the National Organization for Women, a grass-roots advocacy group. “The voters are speaking up and telling us this.”

The Supreme Court decision in June decided a case called *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which ended the federal right to an abortion and sent the matter back to the states and Congress. The ruling also injected abortion into the middle of a heated midterm campaign and Democrats seized on it. National exit polls Tuesday from CNN showed [abortion narrowly trailed inflation](#) as the most important issue for voters, 31 percent to 27 percent.

ADVERTISING

Versace - Sponsored

Versace Sunglasses

Discover More

In Vermont and California, people overwhelmingly voted to enshrine abortion access into their state constitutions. In Michigan, a similar constitutional amendment received [about 57 percent of the vote](#).

In Kentucky, voters narrowly rejected an amendment that would have confirmed that there is no right to an abortion in the state constitution. And in Montana, a referendum that would legally obligate medical providers to attempt to save the life of a “born-alive infant,” including in the rare occurrence of being born alive after an attempted abortion, was on track to be rejected by a slim margin with more than 80 percent of the vote reporting as of late Wednesday afternoon.

If the results in Montana stand, that would give abortion access advocates a clean sweep in the states that had a ballot question that explicitly pertained to abortion.

“[Voters] sent a clear message that stripping women of the right to control their own bodies, their wallets, their future is extreme. I think that the Republicans and some of the pundit class missed that abortion is a kitchen table issue,” said Representative Katherine Clark, a Revere Democrat.

Beyond the ballot measures, voters also handed abortions rights allies wins in several governor’s races in which abortion became a major issue, many of them in places where access has been under threat since the Supreme Court decision.

In Pennsylvania, Democrat Josh Shapiro was projected to defeat Doug Mastriano, an antiabortion Republican. The race was seen as key to whether abortion would remain legal in the state, after multiple attempts by Republicans in the state legislature to pass abortion restrictions were blocked by the outgoing Democratic governor.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, was projected to win reelection as well. She has gone to the courts to protect abortion access in the state, and she defeated

Republican Tudor Dixon, an [antiabortion candidate](#) who has in the past said that

teenage rape victims could find [“healing”](#) through having the child instead of getting an abortion.

And in Wisconsin, yet another battleground, Democratic Governor Tony Evers was projected to defeat Republican Tim Michels. Evers has blocked and gone to court to fight antiabortion legislation.

But abortion opponents touted some victories as well, highlighting candidates like Senator Marco Rubio and Governor Ron DeSantis, both of Florida, who won reelection easily. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, chastised Republican candidates who didn't lean in hard enough on abortion.

“Find your position, contrast with your opponent, and make sure that gets communicated over and over again,” she said Wednesday. “The Dobbs decision made it impossible . . . for the issue to go away.”

Abortion rights advocates had success in state legislative races as well. In [Wisconsin](#) and [North Carolina](#), voters elected enough Democrats to prevent Republican supermajorities that could have overridden Democratic governors' vetoes on abortion bills.

“For the entire Southeast, North Carolina needed to hold so that they can receive that critical care,” said Democratic North Carolina state Senator Natalie Murdock, noting that people from other states travel there to have abortions. “So it was huge, huge, huge that we were [able] to uphold that here in North Carolina.”

She added that she thought a lot of political analysts had missed how interrelated abortion is to the economy in voters' minds, given that having a child [is a financial decision](#).

“Yes we need to articulate what we're going to do around inflation, I think that's fair,”

Murdock said. “But I think folks have to remember that that is what there were a huge

MURDOCK SAID. BUT I THINK FOLKS HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT THAT IS WHY THERE WERE A HUGE

amount of voters that said it was a top issue, because they do in fact tie it in with the economy.”

Though control of the Senate and House has yet to be determined, President Biden has promised to veto any abortion restrictions that might be passed by Republican majorities. While Republicans appeared on track to take control of the House, Democrats managed to ride abortion momentum in a couple of key races.

In Michigan’s Third Congressional District, Democratic candidate Hillary Scholten flipped the seat with a campaign against an opponent of abortion rights. Democrats in the state were hoping the backlash against the Dobbs decision [would help their candidates](#), and it did. Democrats [were on track to take control](#) of both chambers of the legislature as well.

And in Kansas’s Third Congressional District, Sharice Davids, an endangered incumbent and the only Democrat in the state’s delegation, won reelection in an area that [overlaps with much of the part of Kansas](#) that carried the referendum vote for abortion rights back in August.

In Kentucky on Wednesday, abortion rights advocates were already looking ahead to the next battle. The state Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on Nov. 15 related to near-total abortion restrictions currently in place and being challenged.

“We are very hopeful that our state lawsuit will ultimately restore abortion access in the commonwealth,” Jackie McGranahan of the ACLU of Kentucky said.

Globe correspondent Shannon Coan contributed to this report.

Lissandra Villa Huerta can be reached at lissandra.villa@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@LissandraVilla](https://twitter.com/LissandraVilla).

[Show 27 comments](#)

©2022 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC