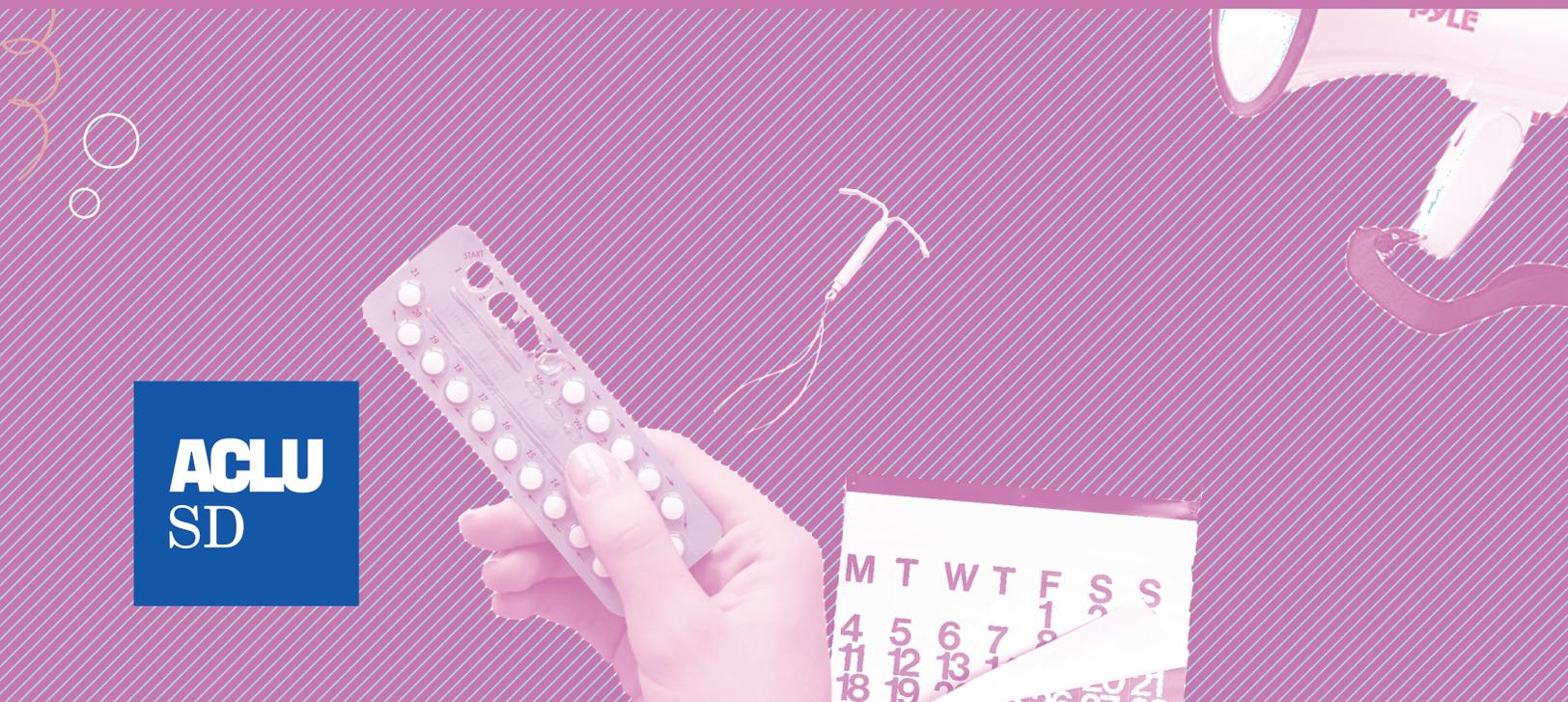




LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM



ACLU
SD

Let's talk about how we can all advocate for and defend reproductive freedom.



Decisions made during the annual sessions of the South Dakota Legislature have a deep and lasting impact on our state's people and communities. As new laws are created and others repealed or written, it's important to ensure that these changes preserve and strengthen our constitutional rights.

The ACLU of South Dakota monitors a wide range of issues at the legislature. Our education, organizing, and lobbying efforts are aimed at informing both lawmakers and the public about the civil rights and civil liberties implications of the bills proposed by our elected officials. The stakes are high for legislative action in 2022, and we must defend and protect the civil liberties of all South Dakotans.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ARE UNDER ATTACK.

Reproductive freedom is a fundamental constitutional right grounded in the privacy protections of the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. And laws that restrict our access to abortion are a violation of our civil rights and liberties.

BUT EXTREMIST POLITICIANS DON'T SEEM TO CARE ABOUT OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.

From Texas and Arizona to right here in South Dakota, politicians are working extremely hard to prevent people from getting an abortion or to shame them out of having one. Whether it's forced waiting periods, medically unnecessary and stigmatizing procedures, requiring coercive and inaccurate medical information to be presented to pregnant people seeking abortion care, legally empowering medical professionals to discriminate against pregnant people because of their personal religious beliefs, or flat-out bans, these politicians are determined to block abortion access. And in doing so, they're robbing pregnant people of their basic human and civil rights.

It's beyond time for South Dakota to recognize that abortion care is essential health care. It is our right to shape our families, to access the health care we need, to decide when or whether we have children, and how we shape our lives.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. IT IS TIME TO END SOUTH DAKOTA'S DECADES OF ATTACKS ON REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM.





Everyone has the ability to make change.

START BY CONNECTING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

Your elected officials are all in office for one reason: to represent you. They need and want to hear from you. Contact them and let them know where you stand on the issues!

With the exception of those in leadership roles, most elected officials in South Dakota have no staff or admin team. That mean your senator and representatives will be the ones answering when you contact them. The amount of response an elected official gets on a certain issue can help determine its importance in their eyes. For example if an elected official is getting a dozens of calls, emails, and letters saying “vote NO on XYZ,” it will make a big impression. Conversely, if they’re not hearing anything from their constituents, they’ll assume no one cares or what they are doing is permissible. Do you know who your legislators are? Or what their thoughts are on issues that matter to you? Find their contact information at sdlegislature.gov or use your smartphone to scan the QR code on the top right.

Whether you’re calling or writing your elected officials, tact is key. Be kind, be firm, be honest, and share your personal story. Facts are important, but personal and relatable stories can play a powerful role in changing hearts, minds, and votes.

- **Make it short and sweet:** If your elected official is receiving dozens of letters or calls about certain hot-button issues, you’ll want to make your point quickly and directly.
- **Tell your story and make it personal:** The more personal your letter is, the more compelling it will be. Tell your elected official how their decisions affect you, your family, and your friends.
- **Problem, solution, action:** In the letter be sure to include the problem, the solution, and the action you want to see taken. (i.e. “It’s beyond time for South Dakota to recognize that abortion care is essential health care. Vote no on HB 1234.”)

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Lawmaker,

I’m writing in today with extreme concern about SB 1234. Senate Bill 1234 undermines the ability of women and families to make personal and private medical decisions. It may also dictate the relationship between health care providers and their patients, putting patients' health at risk.

It is important to respect reproductive autonomy and reserve personal decisions regarding health care and family planning to a woman and her chosen support team. Please do not allow politicians, many with little to no medical knowledge, dictate how South Dakota women are supposed to access reproductive health care.

Please don’t allow far-reaching bills like this to go any further and put private and personal health decisions back where they belong - in the hands of a woman, her family and her doctor. Please vote no on SB 1234.

Thank you.

MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Get to know your legislators: What committees do they serve on? What is their professional background? This information can be helpful in building a relationship with your lawmakers and talking to them about civil liberties issues. Go to sdlegislature.gov to access their contact information. South Dakota legislators can be reached at 605-773-3251 during session.

Follow along at home: Find live and recorded audio of committee and floor hearings on South Dakota Public Broadcasting’s Statehouse website or the SD.Net app. Follow #SDLeg on Twitter for breaking news and coverage.

Attend a legislative coffee or cracker barrel: These public forums are where you can connect with your legislators. Coffees and cracker barrels are often planned by local community groups or chambers of commerce. Don’t miss your chance to hear your elected officials’ views and ask them questions about topics that matter most to you and your community!



Get your friends involved to help advocate for and defend reproductive freedom.

The more people who can engage with legislative advocacy, the better. Your elected officials will respond if they feel like there's a groundswell of support or opposition from their constituents. It only takes a few voices to make a big impact!

Ask your family and friends. The best way to start is with the people closest to you in the community. Let your family and friends know what you are up to and they'll be excited to help you out.

Talk about the issue of reproductive freedom in community spaces. Are you a member of a local civic organization, do you attend a place of worship regularly, or are you involved with a local sports team? Any one of these places could be an opportunity to find an ally. By dipping your toe in the water in these spaces with people you already know, you might be surprised at how many like-minded people you find.

Make it fun. Consider hosting a house party or happy hour (either virtual or in-person). This is a great opportunity to share the goals and resources from this toolkit with your team and get them excited about making a real difference in your communities. It's also an opportunity to have a little fun in the process.

Keep them connected. Consider starting a Facebook group or an email/text chain for your legislative advocacy efforts. Share advocacy materials and updates from the movement, post local events that might be of interest, and consider organizing regular check-ins or meetups. The goal is to keep everyone informed and engaged. Note: If you decide to do regular meetups (either virtually or in-person), this is a great opportunity share your personal stories and brainstorm testimony ideas as a group.



Share your story.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper can be an extremely effective way to influence public opinion and shape legislators' views. Letters to the editor reach a large audience and are often monitored by public officials. Plus, they're fun to read. The "Letter to the Editor" section is often one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper!

Follow these tips:

- **Keep it short.** Most newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Typically aim for 200 words.
- **Make it personal.** Share your own story or experiences – don't worry about trying to be an expert. Start by talking about who you are, then describe a problem or concern, then talk about a solution.
- **Include your contact information.** Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify their identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.
- **Sign it and send it to one of your local newspapers.** Check out aclusd.org/editor or scan the link on the bottom right of this page.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Every day, the future of abortion access is growing more uncertain. In September, the Supreme Court allowed a ban on abortion to take effect in Texas for the first time ever and just heard a direct challenge to Roe v. Wade. Even though the vast majority of Americans support abortion rights, politicians around the country and in South Dakota are passing laws that delay and obstruct access to care, force providers to close their doors, or ban abortion altogether.

Let's be clear: Attacks on abortion care won't stop South Dakotans from needing, and seeking, abortion care. They'll just ensure that the most vulnerable South Dakotans have a much more difficult and costly experience accessing it. When someone decides to have an abortion, it should be safe, accessible, and free from punishment or judgment.

Please urge your legislators to stop the attack on abortion rights in South Dakota.

WHERE TO PUBLISH YOUR LETTER

Make sure your message is heard by publishing to your local newspaper or a statewide publication. Here are a few publications to consider.

- Brookings Register
- Argus Leader
- Rapid City Journal
- Pierre Capital Journal
- Bryant Dakotan
- Dakota Herald
- Freeman Courier
- Lakota Country Times
- Miller Press
- Sioux Valley News
- Yankton Press & Dakotan



Use social media to create change.

Social media is a powerful tool to use to build momentum around your opposition to harmful legislation. You can use social media to rally and thank your supporters and to respond to your opposition. Be sure to use relevant hashtags like #SDLeg or #HiFromSD when posting on Twitter and Instagram. If you see your friends posting content during session, be sure to retweet and like their commentary! It will help ensure your message gets across, too.

Use various social media platforms to reach different audiences.

- Use **Facebook** to reach supporters broadly. Post content on your own personal Facebook wall to create interest or share in advocacy groups and invite your current friends to join.
- Use **Twitter** to insert yourself into the conversation and reach a substantial number of users, even members of the media. When using Twitter, make sure you use relevant hashtags in your tweets. Consider using handles to call out or speak directly to other Twitter users too. This tactic can be a great way to informally engage with your lawmakers. Find their handles at aclusd.org/sdleg-twitter.
- Use **Instagram** to reach a variety of people who are passionate about the issues in a visual way. Use relevant hashtags in your posts and stories. You can easily direct people to message you on how to get involved.

SAMPLE POSTS

Feel free to modify and personalize these – put them in your own voice and add who you are (“As a parent...,” or “As a South Dakotan...”).

- **The law is clear: The Constitution guarantees people the freedom to make health care decisions about their own bodies. Vote no on HB 1234 to keep abortion legal in South Dakota.**
- **Enough is enough. It is time to end South Dakota’s decades of attacks on reproductive freedom. Vote no on HB 1234. It’s beyond time for South Dakota to recognize that abortion care is essential health care. It is our right to shape our families, to access the health care we need, to decide when or whether we have children, and how we shape our lives. Vote no on HB 1234.**
- **Abortion is essential health care, a constitutional right, and a human right. Vote no on HB 1234.**
- **Abortion should be accessible to anyone who needs it. Period. Vote no on HB 1234.**
- **Despite how anti-abortion politicians in South Dakota may frame it, forced pregnancy is not some political talking point: Forced pregnancy is taking away a person’s constitutional and human right to control their body and their future. Vote no on HB 1234.**
- **Denying someone abortion care has devastating and lasting consequences for the pregnant person — it can jeopardize their health, economic well-being, and ability to determine their own future, for not only themselves but their family. Vote no on HB 1234.**

WHERE TO FIND THE ACLU

The ACLU of South Dakota regularly posts content on social media and our website. You can find the ACLU of South Dakota on the following platforms and by visiting aclusd.org/social.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- LinkedIn



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Extend your advocacy beyond the Legislative Session by following the ACLU on social media, getting email alerts, and more.

Real change starts with you and every one of us can help make a difference. ACLU of South Dakota activists help turn our state's most cherished principles into reality.

The ACLU of South Dakota is the foremost civil rights and liberties organization - and we are a movement of people fighting together for justice, freedom, fairness, and equality for all.

- **Follow the ACLU on social media:** aclusd.org/social
- **Get alerted and informed:** aclusd.org/alerts
- **Find more resources to deepen your knowledge as an advocate in South Dakota:** aclusd.org/sdleg-resources