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Election Story

How a Sherrod Brown reelection or a Bernie Moreno win could affect the future of reproductive rights in Ohio

Dubbed as the most financially invested senate race in the country, Democrat incumbent Sherrod Brown and Republican challenger Bernie Moreno hold a key stake in the future of women's reproductive freedom in the state of Ohio. A topic of conversation over the last century has made its way back in the top headlines after the United States Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion. The 2022 decision of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* deferred bodily autonomy decisions to the power of states and their representatives.

So, how does this affect Ohio's 2024 election cycle? For starters, Ohio has transitioned from a heralded key swing state to a republican aligned state. Republicans currently hold major Ohio positions such as Governor (Mike DeWine since 2019), and most recently Ohio Senator JD Vance who edged out Democratic nominee Tim Ryan in 2022. Alas, Ohio will face another key decision. On November 5, voters will decide whether or not to re-elect Brown who has held his seat since 2007 or, continue the state's right-leaning trend and elect Moreno.

In a post-Roe v. Wade society, at least 13 states have banned abortions at all stages with limited exceptions. Four other states withhold abortions after six weeks which according to Jenna Nobles, director of UW-Madison's popular research center, her 2022 study found that more than one in five women are unaware of their pregnancy in the first six weeks due to irregular periods. "In the context of new abortion legislation, it became clear that laws that limit abortion to the period of time before fetal cardiac activity," Nobles said. "This variability all of a sudden becomes really important. For most people, the first signal of a pregnancy is a missed period."

Although citizens overwhelmingly voted against the Ohio 2023 Issue 1 which ensured the right that women and their families would remain in control of their own fetal viability, Moreno and Brown shared different thoughts on the outcome. “Ohioans made it clear that women’s health care decisions should be between them and their doctors, not politicians,” Brown said after the decision. “That’s what I’ve always believed and will continue to fight for in the U.S. Senate.” While Moreno himself was not in an official senate position during the decision, the Republican nominee opposed the 2023 ruling which held firm with his 2021 Senate primary statement saying “I’m 100 percent pro-life with no exceptions.”

Ohio Issue 1

Last updated: 8/9/2023, 9:59:25 AM

County Results ▼

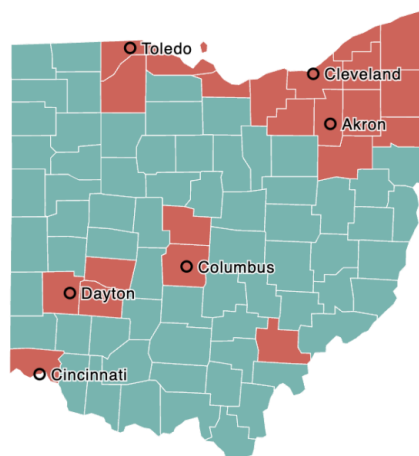
Candidates	Votes	Pct.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1,744,094	57.01%
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	1,315,346	42.99%

* = Incumbent

OHQ

Votes in: **Estimated > 99%**

Votes counted: **3,059,440**



Statistics By: Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics 2023

Since October of last year, Moreno has proposed a 15-week limit to abortions with exceptions in Ohio which showed a shift to his prior statements. Brown on the other hand has

continued his stance to leave the decision up to women and healthcare clinics who perform in-clinic abortions up to 24 weeks outside of life threatening medical exceptions. A September television advertisement created more separation when a recorded video aired of Moreno calling women in favor of abortion “single issue voters.” The featured clip, which was shown in support of Brown’s campaign, was obtained at a Warren County town hall in September in which Moreno singled out suburban white women in particular. The topic has presented itself as a key issue not only in the state of Ohio as Democrats nationwide have spent over \$175 million on TV broadcasted messaging regarding abortion rights this year alone.

“Ohioans showed last year the topic of abortion was important,” said political analysis expert Stephen Mockabee, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati. “The question in this senate race is whether or not the topic is important enough for women and voters in rural areas to preserve Brown’s seat. Issue 1 was a big win for pro-choice Ohioans; however, recent elections haven’t prevented Republicans from getting elected.”

Vance, the Republican Vice Presidential Candidate on this year’s ticket, endorsed Moreno’s campaign efforts last year saying “It’s time to turn the tides on the establishment insiders who sell out our country to special interests and elect more political outsiders like Bernie, who will always put America First in Washington, D.C.”

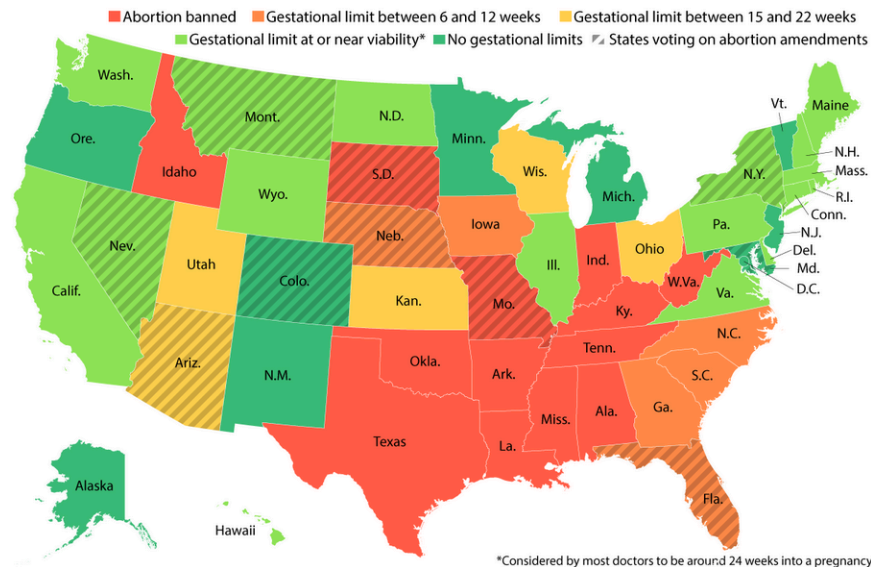
Positioning himself as a heavy pro-life candidate, Vance also shared his displeasures with the Issue 1 ruling last year saying “A lot of people are celebrating right now, and I don’t care about that. I do care about the fact that because we lost, many innocent children will never have a chance to live their dreams. There is something sociopathic about a political movement that tells young women (and men) that it is liberating to murder their own children.”

If the shared belief of heavier restrictions were to stand, here's how it could play out. On the extreme side in Texas, who currently holds one of the strictest abortion bans in the nation, the lone star state prohibits any abortion initiated outside of known life-threatening situations. Penalties can result in \$100,000 fines or in some cases second degree felony charges for providers. In other, less extreme cases, seven states deny access to abortion after 15 weeks or less.

“Ohio is very unique in the sense that in recent years, they’ve fallen in line with a lot of similar viewpoints of fellow midwest states,” Mockabee said. “It’s hard to predict just based on this election where exactly the state will go from here solely based on who’s elected. The people made their voice heard with Issue 1 but a flip of seats in the Ohio Senate could very well contribute to future legislation on a national level.”

Abortion access in the United States

Status of abortion laws in the U.S. as of Oct. 7, 2024



Currently, three out of the five surrounding states hold extreme abortion bans near Ohio. According to a 2023 study by the Guttmacher Institute, 3,100 of 23,800 abortion patients in Ohio were out-of-state residents. Since 2020, the percentage of out-of-state patients has increased from

6% to 14% with a number of them traveling from the surrounding states of Kentucky, Indiana, and West Virginia. As Ohio voters arrive at the polls to vote in a senate race that has the whole nation watching, time will tell as to whether or not abortion access will strengthen or weaken.

Social Media Post: Amidst one of the highest grossing senate races the nation has ever faced, here's where Democrat incumbent Sherrod Brown and Republican nominee Bernie Moreno could affect reproductive rights in Ohio in a post Roe v. Wade society.

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