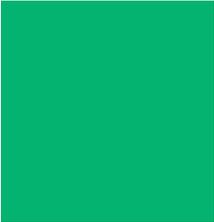


A TOOLKIT FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

OPPOSING NEBRASKA'S LOCAL ABORTION BANS



NEBRASKANS FOR
**ABORTION
ACCESS**



BACKGROUND

ANTI-ABORTION ADVOCATES WANT
TO OUTLAW ABORTION IN YOUR
COMMUNITY. WE NEED YOUR HELP.

In the summer of 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, turning the question of whether abortion is legal to the states. Though abortion is legal in Nebraska, out-of-state anti-abortion extremists are crisscrossing the state trying to outlaw abortion and emergency contraceptives in Nebraska communities.

This practice of using policy to chip away at access, stigmatize care, and confuse those needing abortion care is a highly dangerous reality in which we now live. The future that many people have feared is now at our doorstep and anti-abortion extremists are more emboldened than ever before. While this is certainly a frightening reality, you can take action right now to help make sure that no more Nebraskans are subjected to these dangerous ordinances.

Anti-abortion activists driving this campaign have tried to get cities, towns and villages to adopt these ordinances, but in some cases have failed to do so because of engaged reproductive rights advocates on the ground in those towns. Local advocates sounded the alarm in towns and villages in Nebraska and helped make sure people turned out to voice their opposition. They also ensured that organizations had enough notice to turn up the heat on those city councils. Now it's your turn. In this toolkit you'll find step by step instructions and the resources you need to help prepare for the fight where you live. Remember, you have a constitutional right to speak out and to petition your government for change. If you feel local officials are violating that right through intimidation, retaliation, etc, let us know. Contact the ACLU of Nebraska at gethelp@aclunebraska.org.



STEP-BY-STEP ACTION PLAN

Monitor Government Meeting Agendas

We encourage people across Nebraska to engage with their city council, village board, or equivalent and monitor government meetings. To gain information on your council or board, be sure to visit your municipal government's website or contact your mayor's office or local clerk for a schedule of upcoming meetings. It's imperative to start monitoring the agendas of these meetings to make sure no reproductive or abortion rights items appear. Meeting agendas are sometimes posted online. Hopefully, this will only take five minutes of your time every two weeks. Consider setting a recurring alarm every two weeks as a reminder. If an abortion related item appears on your city council's meeting agenda, please notify us right away at hello@NebraskansForAbortionAccess.com and let us know what is going on. If you see an item that might have to do with abortion access but need more details, request information from your municipal clerk.

Recruit Your Team

The more people from your community that can engage in this fight, the better. Your elected officials will respond if they feel like there is a groundswell against the ordinance from the community. It only takes a few voices in opposition to make a big impact. Here are a few ideas on how to recruit and retain people for your Rapid Response Team:

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 abortion rights 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 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.

Identify other pro-abortion leaders in your community. Many people who care about abortion

are also involved in advocacy around other local issues or may be interested in particular political or social justice organizations. Identifying a geographically and culturally diverse group of committed pro-abortion leaders in your community is invaluable when convincing local elected officials to protect abortion access. Starting the conversation and sharing the toolkit are great ways to make a connection with other local activists.

Make it fun. Consider hosting a house party or happy hour with the people you identify for your Rapid Response Team. 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 their communities. It's also an opportunity to have a little fun in the process.

Keep them connected. Consider starting a Facebook group, group chat or email chain with your Rapid Response Team members. 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, this is a great opportunity to invite guest speakers, prepare for council visits, share your personal stories, and brainstorm testimony ideas as a group. Encourage action. Although some local allies may prefer to remain vigilant watching your city council for anti-abortion agenda items, there are plenty of actions you should encourage the Rapid Response Team to take immediately. For example, encourage them to meet with their own city council members. Having multiple individuals visit their representatives will show that there is widespread support for abortion access in the community. If they are interested in visiting with their members, please share this resource with them.



Meet with Decision Makers

City councils and village boards are made up of diverse individuals who often do not share the same viewpoints or values. Knowing what motivates each of the decision makers in your area can make a huge difference in whether or not we are able to successfully stop an ordinance. For more information, check out the sample scripts at the end of this guide. Once you've reviewed those scripts, you will be ready to meet with your elected official. Follow the below tips for a successful meeting:

Get to know your local landscape. Compile information about decision makers. Try to find out what their policy positions are on reproductive rights and other progressive causes. Based on that research, try to determine if they are likely to support or oppose your position.

Identify local decision-making processes. In some communities, the mayor may drive the local agenda while in other communities it might make more sense to target city council or board members.

Set your meeting. Identify decision makers you want to meet with and request a meeting. Often the best way to do that is to email them at their official addresses or call their phone number during business hours, which can sometimes be found on the town, village, or county website. If this information is not on the website, you may need to make some calls or send some emails to track down the right contact information for the decision maker you want to have a meeting with.

Prepare for the meeting and make your ask. Prior to the meeting, review the messaging guidance found in this guide. Make your case. The purpose of every meeting is to educate the member on the issues and ask them to support your position. To educate the member, talk to them about the issues from your perspective. Let them know why it matters to you personally. After you have made your case, make your ask. We suggest one or both of the below asks as options, depending on the decision maker's reaction:

- Ask them to oppose any anti-abortion ordinance.
- Ask them to keep you informed of what is happening with respect to any anti-abortion ordinances in your community.

Take it to Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool to use to build momentum around abortion access and to educate your community. In fact, most people in this country get their news from social media.

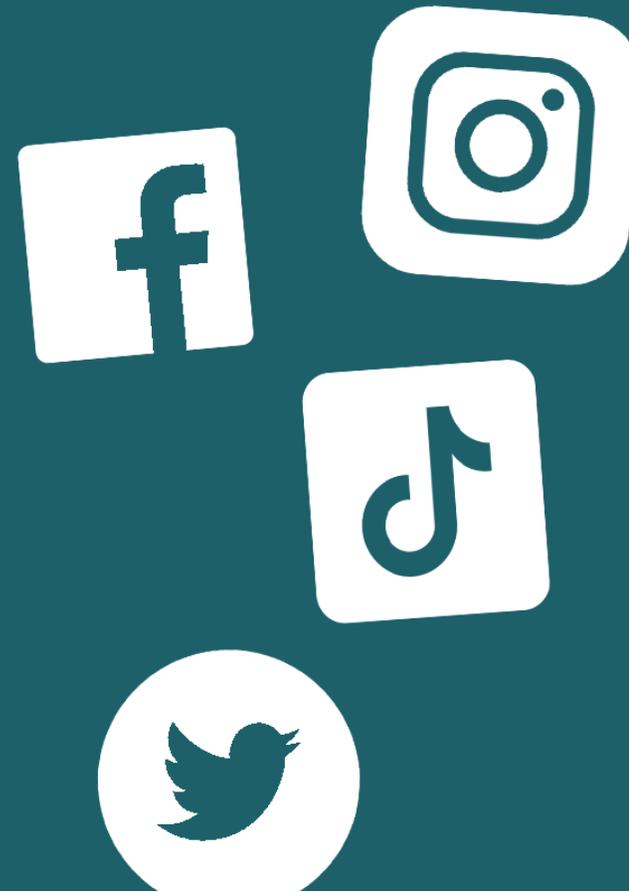
You can use social media to rally and thank your supporters and to respond to your opposition. Below are some general tips to maximize your social media effort.

Facebook is great for reaching supporters quickly. You can choose to either post on your own personal Facebook page to create interest or you can create or join a local abortion advocacy group and invite your current friends to join. You also need to commit to posting on a regular basis in your group. You can always pre-schedule your posts to help keep your page current. For content ideas be sure to follow the organizations who have developed this toolkit.

Twitter is great for inserting yourself into the conversation and reaching a lot of people. When using Twitter, make sure you use relevant hashtags in your post. Do not create a hashtag unless you have a

specific need to do so. Instead use already established abortion access hashtags like #BansOffOurBodies. You can use other people's handles to call out or speak directly to other Twitter users. This can be a great way to informally engage with your decision makers.

Instagram and TikTok are also great ways to meet people where they are! Make sure to follow trending sounds, use stories, and post regularly to keep up engagement.



Control the Narrative

Educating the public and generating support and attention for the issue are a crucial part of any local advocacy campaign. You can use the threat of an abortion ban or other events happening locally and elsewhere to try to generate earned media. A couple of good strategies to use when trying to generate media attention are op-eds and letters to the editor.

Op-eds are articles you submit to a media outlet that reflect your opinion about an issue. They are a good opportunity to educate the public and advance your advocacy within your local community. Most newspapers have rules about how to submit op-eds and the format they must follow in order to be considered for publication. If the newspaper does not have posted guidelines, feel free to call up the opinion editor and ask for them. When writing an op-ed make sure to tailor your piece to your audience and stay focused on your issue. Use facts and research to support your opinion, but also stick to clear and plain language. Make sure to have others read your piece and provide edits or suggestions before you submit it. After submission, make sure you follow up with the editor.

Letters to the editor respond to something that was printed in a newspaper. A letter is a good strategy if you are looking to uplift something that was printed or if you would like to offer a new or contrary perspective. If you are considering submitting a letter to the editor, make sure it is timely. You will also need to follow the rules for submission for that newspaper.

A few quick tips include:

- **Read previous letters.** These show you what types of letters the newspaper usually publishes.
- **Keep it simple and to the point.** Shorter, well written letters are more likely to get published.
- **Know your audience.** Familiarize yourself with what the paper likes to print and try to write toward that audience.
- **Edit your work several times.** Then ask a friend to read it before submitting.
- **Don't have a local paper?** Send it to the nearest paper or post it on a community message board if your community has one.

If you are writing a letter and would like more guidance or help editing, please reach out to hello@NebraskansForAbortionAccess.com.

MY Uterus
IS NOT YOUR
BUSINESS



Prepare for the Meeting

If an abortion related item does appear on your city council or village board agenda, it is time to go into action. First, let us know what's going on by sending an email to hello@NebraskansForAbortionAccess.com. After that, you'll want to make sure you are fully prepared for the meeting. You will need to:

Notify your rapid response team. Let your recruits know the date and time of the meeting and ask them to attend the meeting. You should also encourage them to prepare testimony against the agenda item.

Prepare to testify. Testimony is an oral statement offering your perspective on the agenda item in question. It is important that you commit to testifying, since in-person testimony in city council hearings is viewed as an important reflection of the opinion of the community. Testimony is often limited to three minutes or less. The length of allowed testimony will generally be posted on the agenda. There are also often instructions posted on your city council or village board website.

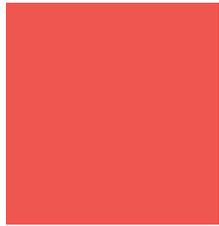
Draft your testimony. Make sure your testimony includes your name, where you live, how long you've lived in the community, if you represent anyone other than yourself, and your position on the agenda item (for or against). The body of your testimony should include why you hold the position you do. This could include a personal story, data from research, and/or examples gathered from other community members. End by reiterating the action you want the council to take on the agenda item.

You can find a model testimony draft at the end of this guide, but we encourage you to draft your testimony in your own words.



Prepare for Elections

If the anti-abortion ordinance is going to be on an upcoming ballot, many of the same action items still apply. You will still need to assemble your team, get active on social media and share the reasons why you oppose anti-abortion ordinances. Instead of meeting with board members or city council members, your goal is to make your case against these ordinances to other voters in your community. Be sure you figure out all the relevant deadlines for registering to vote, getting an early ballot or voting in person. Share this information as widely as possible to ensure all community members who oppose anti-abortion ordinances know these deadlines. Make a plan to vote and help others make their voting plans. You can check your polling location and registration status at [the Nebraska Voter Check website](#) and [register to vote online](#).



CONTACT

For questions or requests for assistance,
please contact us at

hello@NebraskansForAbortionAccess.com.



APPENDIX / RESOURCES

Talking About Abortion

SAY THIS	INSTEAD OF	WHY
Abortion	Euphemisms like “women’s health care” or reproductive choice.	“Health care” encompasses a range of medical care. Using euphemisms for the word abortion gives opposition control over the narrative.
Nebraskan, person, they	Women, she/her	Gender inclusivity. People who don’t identify as women get abortions too.
A person’s (or) Nebraskan’s decision to have an abortion	Person’s choice	A decision is definite, while choice can imply that the person has options and plays into an anti-abortion narrative.
Every pregnancy is different. People seek later abortion care for different reasons and they are all valid reasons.	Late term abortions are rare and people only make the heart-wrenching decision to have a late-term abortion when a pregnancy is no longer viable.	Framing later abortion care as something that only people with wanted pregnancies experience disregards those who can’t access care early on as well as those who no longer want to be pregnant. We should trust people and respect their decisions.

Talking About Abortion (cont.)

SAY THIS	INSTEAD OF	WHY
Legal abortion must be available and affordable.	Abortion should be safe, legal and rare.	Making abortion rare restricts access and makes it dangerous.
Abortion is a safe and common medical procedure that everyone should have access to.	Nobody likes abortion.	1 in 4 people who can become pregnant will have an abortion in their lifetimes. We should normalize it as the safe, common medical procedure it is.
We should ensure access to a full range of pregnancy-related care, from contraception to abortion to postpartum care.	If we want to reduce abortions, we should fund contraception.	We fall under the trap that access to birth control is somehow an alternative to abortion and this can perpetuate stigma around abortion.
Some policymakers and anti-abortion extremists want to impose their values on others.	Demonizing the government as a whole.	We want the government to stay out of personal healthcare decisions but be involved in protecting the rights of all people to access abortion care.

Sample Testimony

“Good Evening Council/Board Members. My name is _____ and I am a resident of _____, I have lived in this town/village for _____ years, and I am here to oppose the effort to ban abortion in _____. The ordinance before you is an extreme proposal that, regardless of your position on abortion, no one should support.

The ordinance would not only ban abortion within our community, including no exceptions for rape and incest, it also purposefully misleads people about their rights under Nebraska law and creates a climate of fear. This unenforceable and unlawful ordinance will open our town up to potential costly litigation that we cannot afford. I want my tax dollars to go toward [fill in something personal here], and not toward defending lawsuits.

Furthermore, banning abortion in _____ is just plain wrong. Abortion is healthcare. Regardless of how each member individually feels about abortion, when a Nebraskan has made that decision, there shouldn't be additional hurdles and barriers put in their path. Banning abortion does not make it magically go away.

All it does is expose people who need that care to more risks.

This ordinance is just a waste of time and taxpayer dollars. I urge the members to stop outside groups from inviting controversy to our town and to focus on the issues that we elected you to handle. This ordinance is too extreme for _____ and I ask you to vote no.”

Sample Call Script for Calling Local Decision Makers

“Hello _____. My name is _____ and I am a resident of _____, I have lived in this town/village for _____ years, and I am calling to ask you to oppose the effort to ban abortion.

I am asking you to oppose this ban because it is unenforceable under Nebraska law and seeks to confuse and mislead people in _____. I also don't want _____ to be exposed to potential litigation over something like this. Also, regardless of how you personally feel about abortion, when a Nebraskan has made that decision, there shouldn't be additional hurdles and barriers put in their path. Banning abortion doesn't make it magically go away. All it does is expose people who need care to more risks.

This ordinance is a waste of time and taxpayer dollars. I urge you to oppose this and focus on the issues that we elected you to handle. This ordinance is too extreme for _____ and I ask you to vote no.”

Sample Text Scripts for Contacting Family and Friends

Texts should be short, to the point, and ideally personalized! These are examples of what to text to friends and family in your area.

“Hi _____, this is _____! I wanted to let you know that our local officials are trying to implement an extreme ban on abortion. Not only is this ban contrary to Nebraska law, it will have real consequences for people who need abortions. Will you join me in [calling a decision maker/voting] to fight this ban?”

NebraskansForAbortionAccess.com is managed by five Nebraska-based abortion rights advocacy organizations, including the ACLU of Nebraska, I Be Black Girl, Nebraska Abortion Resources, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Nebraska, and Women's Fund of Omaha. Thank you to our friends at the ACLU of Ohio and ACLU of Texas for the inspiration for this toolkit.

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