

Committee to Protect Health Care: Wisconsin doctors urge legislators to let voters decide on abortion, support Evers' referendum measure in special session

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MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin physicians yesterday urged legislators to support efforts that would let voters decide in a referendum to repeal the state's pre-Civil War-era criminal abortion ban. Gov. Tony Evers has asked the Wisconsin Legislature to hold a special session on Tuesday to reform Wisconsin's onerous referendum requirements and create a pathway for voters to weigh in on the state's 1849 abortion ban – an idea that even staunch abortion opponent and cosponsor of national ban legislation [U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson has expressed support for.](#)

“Wisconsin voters recognize that women should have the freedom to make their own personal health care decisions, and legislators in Madison should let voters make their voices heard on this important issue,” said **Dr. Ann Helms, a critical care neurologist in Milwaukee and State Lead for the Committee to Protect Health Care.** “Physicians see every day how Wisconsin's abortion ban endangers women's health and safety. Now, more and more Wisconsin voters understand that abortion bans have far-reaching adverse effects on women and families, including their loved ones, and they deserve the opportunity to be heard. Even Senator Ron Johnson has said he believes there should be exceptions to Wisconsin's abortion ban for rape and incest, made through a [direct referendum](#). It's time for Republican politicians to back up their statements by letting voters decide.”

Republicans in the Legislature have [stated](#) they plan to gavel in and gavel out of the special session without taking up Gov. Evers' proposal. When asked about Gov. Evers' call for allowing the referendum, [Sen. Johnson called it a "political stunt,"](#) even though he said previously that he believed exceptions for rape and incest should be made to the state's abortion ban through a direct referendum.

"As physicians concerned about our patients and women across Wisconsin, we're grateful when our elected officials both in Madison and Washington, D.C., stand up for women's freedom and health," said **Dr. Jill Cousino, an OB/GYN in Rock County**. "As increasingly more Wisconsin women are being forced to delay health care or travel to other states for abortion, we hope that Republican leaders in the Legislature will reconsider their plan to just gavel in and gavel out, and instead work with Gov. Evers to let voters opt to repeal this dangerous ban. We hope that Senator Johnson will stop playing politics and actually support giving voters a pathway to ensure Wisconsin women, especially victims of rape and incest, aren't forced to give birth."

Tim Michels, Republican candidate for governor, [recently claimed to change his position](#) on part of Wisconsin's ban. He consistently said he supported the ban as written, with no exceptions for rape or incest, but days ago said he'd support exceptions as governor.

"The fact that politicians like Tim Michels are changing their positions on abortion on a dime demonstrates why they shouldn't be able to interfere in women's personal health care decisions," said **Dr. Bob Freedland, an ophthalmologist in La Crosse**. "By repealing Wisconsin's outdated abortion ban, voters can ensure that these deeply private decisions remain between women and their doctors, without government interference. By letting voters have a say, our lawmakers can ensure that doctors are able to use the full range of treatments when complications arise in pregnancy, to ensure the best health outcomes for our patients. Wisconsin voters deserve the opportunity to be heard on an outdated law that makes pregnant women suffer through severe complications, forces rape victims to give birth and punishes doctors for providing medically necessary care."

View a recording of the press call [here](#).

About the Committee to Protect Health Care

The Committee to Protect Health Care is a national mobilization of doctors, health

care professionals, and advocates who are building a pro-patient health care majority in Congress and in states so that we can live in an America where everyone has the health care they need to thrive. To learn more:

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