

Q&A

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We're excited to highlight one of our new summer fellows, Sophie Webb. A rising second-year law student at UCLA Law, Sophie previously worked as a legal assistant in both private practice and at a regional law firm. We sat down with Sophie to learn more about her path to the Center, how her longstanding commitment to gender equity and social justice shaped her interest in reproductive health, the projects she is working on this summer, and what has made the greatest impact on her fellowship experience so far.

**Q:** Can you please tell us a bit about yourself and what initially drew you to apply for a summer fellowship with the Center?

**A:** I just completed my first year at UCLA Law after relocating to California from the east coast. From the beginning of high school up until the end of college, I had the opportunity to volunteer with the non-profit Hardy Girls, an organization dedicated to empowering girls and non-binary youth to drive political change. This experience was really transformative for me. It sparked a passion for gender equity and social justice in general and inspired me to minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. When I

learned about the Center, I was immediately excited by the work, and I could not pass up the opportunity to be a summer fellow here. I think the policy side of the legal field is not as well advertised at the law school, so I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to experience that part of the Center's work first-hand.

**Q:** What sort of projects are you working on this summer at the Center? What are you most excited about?

**A:** So far this summer I have been researching for and contributing to a couple of the Center's case tracking projects. Specifically, I have been helping track shield law legislation and looking into state cases arguing for reproductive freedom through state constitutions. Having just taken constitutional law this past spring, tracking the progress of state constitutional cases has been fascinating. It is interesting to see how some of the types of arguments we discussed in constitutional law are being used in real time and which have been successful and which have not. I am really enjoying working on tasks that are unfolding in real time.

**Q:** What's been the most surprising or impactful part of your fellowship experience so far?

**A:** The most impactful part of my experience so far has been the opportunity to connect with and learn from experts in the field of reproductive health, including the wonderful staff at the Center. I have been able to attend multiple seminars and webinars and listen to experts from different areas of the field, from researchers to physicians to public defenders. It has been so informative to see how all these experts are approaching the same or similar challenges but doing so from completely different angles. This work can be emotionally draining, but it is so important. Witnessing the commitment so many different corners of the legal profession have to reproductive freedom and healthcare is very motivating.

## Policy News

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Photo credit: UNICEF

New preliminary [federal data](#) shows that infant mortality in the United States fell to a record low in 2025, continuing a trend of declining infant deaths nationwide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the infant mortality rate dropped to fewer than 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2025, down from 5.52 in 2024. At the same time, significant racial and geographic disparities persist. In 2024, infant mortality rates among infants born to Black women remained more than twice as high as rates among infants born to white, Hispanic, and Asian women, and rates varied dramatically by state. Experts attribute

these disparities to factors including access to growing maternity care deserts due to hospital labor and delivery closures, insurance barriers, and post-Dobbs abortion restrictions that may be influencing quality of care. Advances in medical care, public health interventions, RSV prevention efforts, and safe sleep education may be contributing to recent improvements, but the United States continues to experience higher infant mortality rates than most other high-income countries.

## Legal News

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Photo credit: Natalie Behring/Getty Images

A Wyoming judge [has struck down](#) three state abortion restrictions passed in 2025, ruling that they violate a 2012 amendment to the Wyoming Constitution guaranteeing individuals' rights to make their own healthcare decisions. This final judgment comes just six months after the state Supreme Court held that abortion is a protected healthcare decision under the 2012 amendment. The decision invalidates laws that would have imposed mandatory ultrasounds and a 48-hour waiting period, tightened unnecessary and burdensome licensing requirements for abortion clinics, and restricted the prescription of medications commonly used in abortion care. The court found that the state failed to provide sufficient evidence that the restrictions were medically necessary or that they furthered a compelling interest in protecting health and safety. And it credited plaintiffs evidence showing abortion in Wyoming is already a safe procedure with no recorded complications or deaths. The decision preserves access to care amid ongoing legislative efforts to further restrict abortion in the state, including a separate six-week ban that remains under litigation.



Photo credit: Jacob Moscovitch/Getty Images

A Missouri circuit court has permanently [struck down](#) a broad set of abortion restrictions, finding that many of the laws violate the state's Reproductive Freedom Amendment ratified by voters in 2024. The ruling invalidates key provisions, including a 72-hour waiting period, in-person physician visit requirements, and rules requiring that patients take the first dose of medication abortion in the presence of a provider. Planned Parenthood affiliates in the state say the decision will allow them to resume prescribing abortion medication in Missouri [for the first time](#) since 2018. While this decision marks a major turning point in litigation that has been ongoing for two years, Missourians' reproductive freedom rights remain under attack. Voters will return to the ballot box this November to consider a new constitutional amendment that could repeal the reproductive freedom protections approved in 2024.

## Food for Thought

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With so much going on in the world of reproductive health, law, and policy, every week we'll share articles, books, and media you might have missed.

[Miscarriage Management Remains Muddled 4 Years After Dobbs](#)

[A New Way Some State Courts Limit Abortion Rights](#)

[Organizers In Idaho, Nevada, And Virginia Are Putting Abortion Rights On Ballot](#)

[American Dads Can Help Address The Maternal Mortality Crisis](#)



Reimagining the future of reproductive health, law, and policy.

UCLA Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy is a think tank and research center created to develop long-term, lasting solutions that advance all aspects of reproductive justice, and address the current national crisis of abortion access.

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