

A TEXAS REPUBLICAN WANTS TO BAN PEOPLE FROM READING ABOUT HOW TO GET AN ABORTION ONLINE

BY BESS LEVIN, MARCH 1, 2023

Abortion has been [illegal in Texas](#) at virtually any time during pregnancy, with no exceptions for rape or incest, since August 2022. It is also a felony to perform the medical procedure in the state, and those who do so [face life in prison](#). With such draconian laws on the books, you might think even the most anti-choice champions in the state, who can't stand the idea of pregnant people being able to make their own decisions about their own bodies, would ease up on the crusade against reproductive freedom. That they would say to themselves, Okay, abortion is banned here and providers can go away for *life* over it—we've done enough. But, of course, it's never enough, hence a new bill trying to (1) make it a felony to help someone pay for an abortion outside the state and (2) force internet providers to block websites containing information about obtaining an abortion.

Yes, *websites*. Late last week, Texas lawmaker **Steve Toth** introduced [HB2690](#), which would require internet service providers to “make every reasonable and technologically feasible effort to block Internet access to information or material intended to assist or facilitate efforts to obtain an elective abortion or an abortion-inducing drug.” Text of the legislation specifically names [Plan C](#), [Hey Jane](#), and [Aid Access](#), among others. The bill would also allow individuals to [sue](#) people who maintain such sites and criminalize abortion funds that help people obtain abortions in other states—even if abortion is legal in those places. In the “criminal offenses” section, the bill notes:

A person that knowingly pays for or reimburses the costs associated with obtaining an elective abortion performed on a pregnant woman commits an offense. An offense under this subsection is a felony of the second degree, except that the offense is a felony of the first degree if an unborn child dies as a result of the offense. The prohibition...applies regardless of: (1) the individual on whom the elective abortion is performed; (2) the location at which the elective abortion is performed; (3) the law of the jurisdiction in which the elective abortion is performed; and (4) whether the payment or reimbursement is provided directly or through an intermediary.

This obviously raises a lot of questions, the biggest one being: What the f--k is wrong with Texas? But also: Do “costs associated with” strictly relate to the procedure, or do they include travel? What about people who simply offer up a place to stay to anyone getting an abortion outside the state without money being exchanged? The Pentagon [announced](#) last year that it would cover travel fees for members of the military if abortion is banned where they are stationed—is Texas going to prosecute the federal government?

As *The New Republic* [notes](#), medication abortions, i.e., abortions that can be performed outside of a doctor's office using pills, represent more than half of all abortions in the United States. So it's not really that surprising that antiabortion zealots in Texas, who have effectively banned all surgical abortions in the state (except in rare instances to save the life of the mother), are now setting their sights on them. And while it's not clear if HB2690 will ultimately pass, the abortion pill is under grave threat on another front, thanks to a forthcoming ruling from a Texas judge that could effectively [ban the drug nationwide](#).