



## Trump pardons abortion clinic protesters ahead of March for Life

"They should not have been prosecuted," said the president.



President Donald Trump's pardons come amid mounting frustration within the anti-abortion movement about his lack of attention to its priorities since taking office. | Allison Joyce/AFP via Getty Images

By **ALICE MIRANDA OLLSTEIN**

01/23/2025 04:12 PM EST

Updated: 01/23/2025 06:10 PM EST



President Donald Trump on Thursday issued pardons for nearly two dozen people who were convicted for blocking access to and temporarily shutting down abortion clinics, some of whom are currently serving federal sentences.

"They should not have been prosecuted. Many of them are elderly people," Trump said. "This is a great honor to sign this."

Trump described the group as “peaceful protesters.” Yet many of them were charged with barricading the doors of clinics with bicycle locks and other implements, pushing and in some cases injuring clinic workers, and preventing patients from accessing health services.

According to the Thomas More Society, which represented many of the convicted individuals in federal court, Trump’s pardon includes a group of abortion opponents arrested after they forced their way into an abortion clinic in Washington in 2020 and blocked its entrance for several hours. Five of them [were convicted in 2023](#) for “using a physical obstruction to injure, intimidate and interfere with the clinic’s employees and a patient, because they were providing or obtaining reproductive health services,” then-President Joe Biden’s Justice Department said.

Also pardoned is Bevelyn Williams, a Tennessee woman [sentenced to 41 months](#) in prison for “interference, including by threats and force, with individuals seeking to obtain and provide lawful reproductive health services.” Williams, according to the DOJ, crushed a clinic staff member’s hand in a door while attempting to block access to a New York City facility in 2020. She also participated in a separate demonstration at a Florida clinic in 2022, which federal authorities said caused delays “in treating at least a dozen patients, three of whom were scheduled for time-sensitive procedures that could have resulted in bleeding, infection, or significant pain without timely treatment.”

Several anti-abortion groups, including Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, Students for Life, the Thomas More Society and Americans United for Life, lobbied Trump to issue the pardons — in open letters and social media posts as well as through private channels. Many of those groups praised Trump after the pardons were announced on Thursday, but stressed that they will keep pressure on him to deliver for them on several other policy fronts.

“We are grateful that this has taken precedence in the first week of President Trump’s second term,” Human Coalition President Jeff Bradford said in a statement. “We look forward to the future steps this administration will take to continually advocate for the pro-life movement.”

The activists were convicted of violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, known as the FACE Act. Some anti-abortion groups and GOP lawmakers have called for repealing the law, while others have said it should be updated to prevent it from being disproportionately applied to anti-abortion conservatives. Yet the law has also been used — including [as recently as earlier this month](#) — to charge abortion-rights protesters who target faith-based crisis pregnancy centers.

Trump's pardons — one day before he is [set to address](#) the annual anti-abortion March for Life on Friday by video — come amid mounting frustration within the movement about his lack of attention to its priorities since taking office. Trump broke with his GOP predecessors by not signing executive orders imposing anti-abortion restrictions on domestic and international family planning programs in his first couple days in office.

President George W. Bush signed the policy — which was created under President Ronald Reagan — on his [second full day in power](#) in 2001, and [Trump signed an expanded version of it](#) on Jan. 23 of his first term in 2017.

“We certainly expect and hope that it will be just like Trump 1, but bigger and better, as Trump's promises always tend to be in areas like this,” Marjorie Dannenfelser, the leader of SBA, told reporters on Thursday.

While she and other conservative activists still expect him to sign those orders, some are concerned that the issue does not appear to be a priority for the president.

Another anti-abortion activist, granted anonymity because they fear retaliation from the administration, complained that Trump had moved on his first day in office to pardon more than 1,500 people convicted of crimes related to the invasion of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, but waited until Thursday to take action on the clinic protesters.

“These pardons are fully in line with Trump's agenda to oppose the weaponization of the government,” she said. “So why he couldn't have

pardoned them along with the 1,500 on Day 1 is beyond me.”

FILED UNDER: DONALD TRUMP, ABORTION, ABORTION RIGHTS, ANTI-ABORTION

## POLITICO Pulse

Delivered daily by 10 a.m., Pulse examines the latest news in health care politics and policy.



### EMAIL

Your Email

---

### EMPLOYER

Employer

---

\* All fields must be completed to subscribe

SIGN UP

By signing up, you acknowledge and agree to our Privacy Policy and Terms of Service. You may unsubscribe at any time by following the directions at the bottom of the email or by contacting us here. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply.

### SPONSORED CONTENT



#### Gov. Spanberger Signs \$15 Minimum Wage Bill

Washington Examiner



#### Assisted Living Accelerates 'The Decline.' What This Son Did Instead

The alternative that changed everything for his family  
gekkogifts.com



#### After 60, Leg Strength Comes From One Simple Daily Move

primenutritionfindings.com

About Us

Advertising

Breaking News Alerts

Careers