



THANK  
YOU.

## Last Week at the Montana Legislature

May 2, 2021

### Well, folks, we made it.

The past few months have been a rollercoaster and this last week was no exception. Let's take just a moment to reflect on everything that you — yes, you — accomplished over the course of Montana's 67th Legislative Session. You made your voices heard with thousands of phone calls and emails to legislators. You testified in opposition to truly awful pieces of legislation. You wrote letters to the editors of your hometown newspapers. And you had conversations with your families and friends and neighbors about what was happening at the Capitol and how they could help.

We knew that this session was going to be challenging (to say the *absolute* least). But you put up a fight at every turn and we couldn't be more thankful that we were able to fight alongside you. Thank you for everything that you did and for everything that you'll

continue to do as Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana takes the fight all the way to the courts and the ballot box in the months to come.

We'll keep you in the loop every step of the way, but your ideas and questions are always welcomed in our [info@ppamt.org](mailto:info@ppamt.org) inbox!

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## Abortion Court: What Happened (And What Didn't!)

A quick recap:

In a first-of-its-kind proposal, an [amendment to HB 686](#) by Rep. Matt Regier (R), House District 4, would have required that before the state may reimburse a provider for any service related to an abortion, a tribunal of three politically-appointed physicians would get to decide if a safe, legal abortion meets the arbitrary reimbursement criteria established by the state.

The current Governor, Senate President, and the Speaker of the House would have been able to appoint a physician to the Abortion Court where their sole job would be to second-guess the decisions of their peers by investigating private medical records.

On Friday, April 23, the amendment was voted down in Senate Finance & Claims. Rep. Regier and supporters acted quickly to get funding for the amendment considered by the House Bill 2 Conference Committee where Republicans had a supermajority of 4-2. On Wednesday, April 28, those committee Republicans agreed to have [Montanans pay \\$90,000 for a study of the 'need' for an Abortion Court in Montana](#). We wouldn't call this a win, particularly when it's taxpayers' hard-earned dollars being spent on a completely superfluous review, but the entirely-Republican-appointed Abortion Court itself is at least off the table for now.

And we really cannot stress this enough: Your hundreds of emails and calls on this issue were absolutely instrumental! In many ways, the Capitol can feel like a different planet and it was absolutely crucial last week that we reminded Republicans at every turn that their constituents back home were watching closely to ensure that there were no backroom deals to sneak the amendment into a policy bill.

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## No Thank You.

On Wednesday, Lee newspapers across the state featured a full-page ad sponsored by the Montana Reproductive Rights Coalition. The ad featured these (tragically) real direct quotes from extremist anti-abortion legislators:

*"It would be better for them to have a millstone hung around their head and drowned in the sea."*

Sen. David Howard (R), Senate District 29, defending House Bill 167

*"Administering chemical abortion drugs should be considered malpractice."*

Rep. Jennifer Carlson (R), House District 69, defending House Bill 171

*"There is no such thing as abortion being necessary to save the life of the mother."*

Sen. Theresa Manzella (R), Senate District 44, defending HB 337

*"My simple mind, not being an attorney or a doctor, but I am on Judiciary so I get to make the decisions. So."*

Rep. Barry Usher (R), House District 40, defending HB 167

Unfortunately, [these weren't the only shameful statements made by anti-abortion legislators](#). The 67th Legislative Session featured a number of attacks on reproductive health, on sexual health, and on Montana values in general. To learn more about each bill and what they could mean for Montanans — and to sign up to join us in fighting these laws, head to [the MRRC's NoThankYou.me website!](#)

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## Recommended Reading

**Montana Standard:** [Guest view: How the pain of losing a newborn became a perverse political football](#)

Planned Parenthood stands with Montanans. You are our priority. And your health and well-being will never be a political football for us. Nor will your family's pain and heartbreak. On the other hand, if you're looking for elected officials and a political party that will put their own power and ascension in the ranks over your needs and desires, well, the Republicans and the Regiers are your touchdown.

**Daily Montanan:** [It's 'sine die' for the 2021 Montana Legislature](#)

In addition to those bills, lawmakers passed several other policies this session as part of a broader conservative social program, namely limiting access to abortion. They also ended same-day voter registration and beefed up voter ID requirements, among others, leading to accusations of voter suppression from Democrats.

**Montana Public Radio:** [Capitol Talk: 2021 Legislature Recap](#)

I talked with opponents to some of these abortion bills about what to expect in terms of litigation. And these are opponents who, through the legislative process, has said that litigation is a likely outcome if this were to become law. They've raised concerns about constitutionality of these bills, especially given some of the really strong privacy protections at the Montana state Constitution has.

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## Thank You!

Yes, it's worth saying it again (and again). The 67th Legislative Session may be over, but the fight continues and we're so grateful to have you by our side throughout it all.

[Visit our website.](#)

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