

CONVERSATION ★ GUIDE ★

VOTE YOUR
★ RIGHTS ★



ACLU

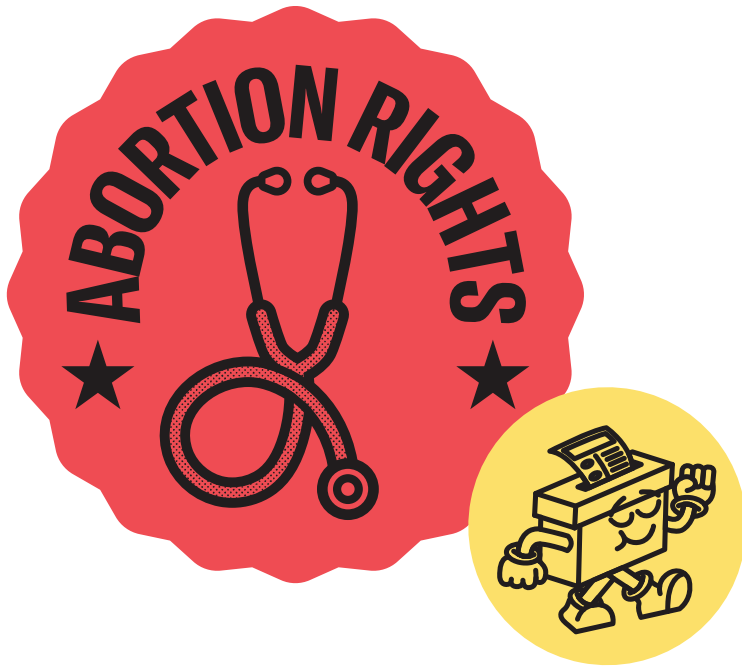
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Helpful Tips

- ★ Create a safe space - A safe conversation is one in which everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. Offer mutual respect and make the most of common ground.
- ★ Listen - Be interested in what others have experienced and acknowledge their point of view.
- ★ Advocate - Inform yourself about the issues that matter to you, so that you can share the facts. Sharing personal stories can also show what's at stake.





Key Points

- 1** The decision to get an abortion shouldn't belong to politicians — it should belong to individuals. Abortion is essential, lifesaving health care.
- 2** Forcing someone to carry a pregnancy against their will has life-altering consequences, including long-lasting serious health risks from continued pregnancy and childbirth; making it harder to escape poverty; derailing education, career, and life plans; and making it more difficult to leave an abusive partner.
- 3** Anti-abortion politicians won't stop at banning care in states where they're in power, they want to ban abortion entirely, nationwide. In fact, a national abortion ban was introduced in the U.S. Senate soon after the Supreme Court took away our federal right to abortion.

- 4** This upcoming election will determine if we have elected officials fighting for abortion rights in Congress, in state legislatures, or even in your local community. This is a dire moment.
- 5** More than a dozen states have begun enforcing abortion bans in the years after the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, leaving around one in three people without access to essential, lifesaving care.

FAQ

Q: Can people get an abortion if they need one?

A: After the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the ability to access abortion depends on where you live. For those living in states where care is banned, there are two main choices: seeking care in another state if you are able or being forced to carry a pregnancy against your will.

Q: Is abortion safe, and how common is it?

A: Yes, abortion is one of the safest medical procedures performed today. It's 99 percent safe, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly one in three women will have an abortion in her lifetime. As a matter of fact, six out of every 10 women who have abortions are already mothers.

Q: I live in a state that's friendly to abortion rights, so I don't have to worry about abortion bans, right?

A: No. Anti-abortion rights politicians won't stop with only banning abortion in only some of the states across the country, they want to completely ban care nationwide and will do so if they are put into power. And if a national ban is passed, state protections for care will be wiped away completely. That's why this election is so important.

Q: The Supreme Court took away our right to abortion, is there anything we can do to protect abortion rights on the federal level?

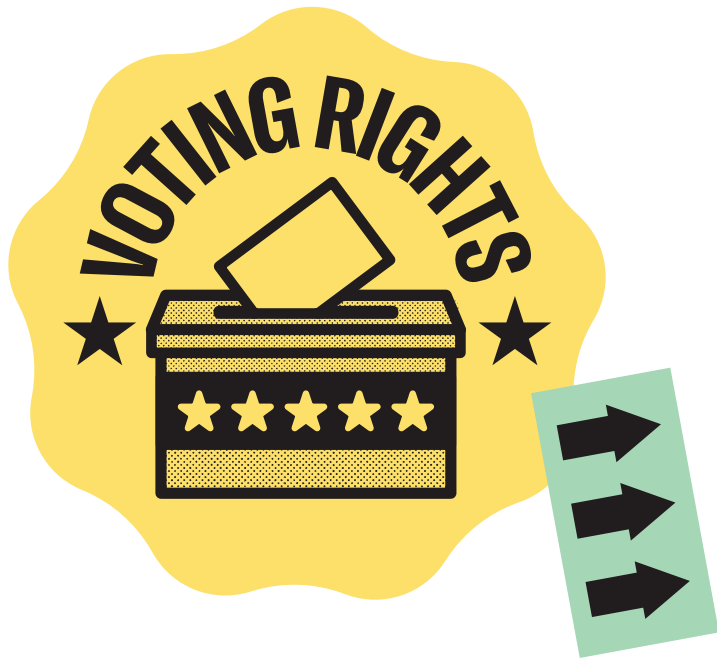
A: Yes, Congress can pass a law that would protect access to abortion nationwide and override many of the harmful state bans. But that won't be possible unless we elect a strong, pro-abortion rights majority in the U.S. House and Senate this November that will fight for our fundamental rights.

Q: What about on the local level?

A: In many states, state supreme courts, governors, and state legislatures — all elected officials — will be the ones making policies on abortion rights. That's why it's so important to vote for your rights in your local offices as well as federal ones.

Conversation Starters

- ★ With abortion banned in states across the country, the burden falls hardest on pregnant people from Black and Brown communities.
- ★ When these bans are enforced, politicians are threatening to put doctors in jail for providing essential care and women in jail for accessing it.
- ★ Abortion is essential health care — and lifesaving in some circumstances. People from all walks of life need access to abortion care, which one in three women will receive in her lifetime. Read about some of these stories on the ACLU's website [here](#).



Key Points

- 1 Democracy is free and fair only when every eligible American has the freedom to vote.
- 2 Voting is a fundamental and constitutional right, not a privilege.
- 3 Our elected officials should be reflective of all communities and represent our interests.
- 4 The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy and the fundamental right upon which all our civil liberties rest.
- 5 Voting should be equally accessible for all citizens, no matter where they live, the color of their skin, or how much money they make.

FAQ

Q: I thought everyone could vote. Is voter suppression a real thing?

A: Voter suppression, the practice of influencing the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing specific groups of people from voting, is a real problem. Voter suppression bills put up unnecessary barriers for people to register to vote, vote by mail, or vote in person. The result is a severely compromised democracy that doesn't reflect the will of the people. Our democracy works best when all eligible voters can participate and have their voices heard.

Q: I've been hearing so much about voter fraud. Is this a real problem?

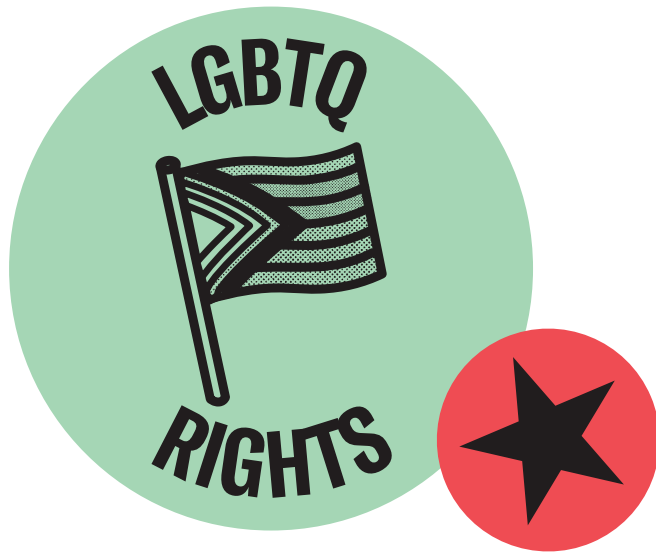
A: There is no evidence that the United States has a problem with voter fraud. Studies have shown there's less than a one tenth of a percent chance of voter fraud in the United States. Many studies have found that voter fraud is extraordinarily rare in our country, yet some public officials continue to tell Americans falsehoods about the state of our elections. The true threat to our elections is voter suppression, not fraud.

Q: What's wrong with requiring voter ID?

A: Unnecessarily strict voter identification laws are a part of an ongoing strategy to roll back decades of progress on voting rights. The fact is that nearly 29 million voting-age Americans do not have the photo identification these laws require. Not all voter ID requirements are discriminatory or burdensome to voters, but seven states have strict photo ID laws, under which voters must present one of a limited set of forms of government-issued photo ID in order to cast a regular ballot.

Conversation Starters

- ★ Seventy-two percent of Americans are dissatisfied with how our democracy is working. That's why it's important we elect leaders who want to make sure every eligible voter can access the ballot box.
- ★ In the last two years, hundreds of voter suppression bills have been introduced. Voter suppression efforts can seem unobstructive, like strict voter ID laws and cuts to early voting, but they have a real impact. These measures make it harder for people of color, students, the elderly, and people with disabilities to register and vote.



Key Points

- 1** LGBTQ people deserve to live without fear of prejudice or discrimination because of who they are or who they love. But politicians nationwide continue to target transgender people — transgender youth especially — with unlawful and unconstitutional attacks.
- 2** Transgender youth deserve the same chance to thrive as their peers, but face much higher rates of harassment, violence, poverty, homelessness, and suicide. Ensuring they have safe schools, loving homes, and inclusive communities is paramount to helping these vulnerable young people.
- 3** In recent years, politicians have targeted transgender youth with baseless and discriminatory laws attempting to limit their rights in school — forcing them to use the wrong restrooms, banning them from school sports, censoring stories and books about their experiences, and banning lifesaving gender-affirming health care.

- 4** Gender-affirming care is lifesaving care, giving transgender people the same chance to thrive as their peers. But the same people banning abortion across the country are fighting to criminalize this specialized form of medicine, terrorizing providers and hospitals, and even threatening to remove transgender youth from their parents' custody.

FAQ

Q: What is gender-affirming care?

A: Gender-affirming care is a very individualized form of health care, and will look different for each person depending on their age, gender, and other physical and mental health needs. For prepubescent transgender youth, this care typically involves a “social transition” (changing clothes, hair, name, etc.) and never involves surgery or other irreversible medical treatments. During or after puberty, many transgender youth may receive reversible puberty blockers, hormone replacement therapy, or other medical interventions as prescribed by medical professionals. Older transgender adolescents can and do access surgical care on a case-by-case basis as recommended by the World Professional Association of Transgender Health.

Q: Aren't female transgender athletes cheating?

A: No. Transgender athletes are underrepresented at both the K-12 and collegiate level in every sport. Most professional sports leagues have been playing under trans-inclusive policies for more than a decade, and the full inclusion of transgender athletes has the support of icons like Billie Jean King, Megan Rapino, Abby Wambach, and Sue Bird.

Q: Is the right to same-sex marriage under threat?

A: In his concurring opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas raised the possibility of revisiting the Supreme Court precedent that recognized the right to marriage equality. However, the majority opinion of the court made clear the ruling on *Roe* did not impact the right to marriage, and a case doing so would need to go through the entire judicial system.

Q: How can I best support the transgender youth in my life?

A: First and foremost, be thankful a transgender person has shared their authentic self with you. Many remain in the closet for fear of mistreatment, rejection, or even violence. Second, use the name and pronouns they request; try practicing writing about this young person using their new name and pronouns if you find it difficult. Third, ask them about their feeling of safety in other settings — school, home, with friends, or with friends' families. Transgender youth need the adults in their lives to stand up for them and defend their right to safe schools, loving homes, and inclusive communities.

Conversation Starters

- ★ Since February 2022, Texas has been targeting the families of transgender youth and threatening to remove their children from their custody. Just think about your children being taken from you. Families should not be targeted for doing what is best for their child.
- ★ Transgender people are four times as likely to experience violence, three times as likely to go hungry, and twice as likely to live in poverty. Yet, since 2019, the number of anti-transgender bills introduced has doubled, in a coordinated campaign against some of the country's most vulnerable.



FREE SPEECH AND RACIAL JUSTICE



Key Points

- 1** We have a First Amendment right to read and learn free from censorship and discrimination. This means the government can't ban books or censor classroom discussions about race and gender just because they disagree with them.
- 2** Since 2021, dozens of states have introduced or passed classroom censorship bills that restrict students and teachers from discussing race, gender, and sexuality in public schools. At the same time, politicians and school boards across the country are moving to ban books — predominantly those by Black and LGBTQ authors — from public schools and libraries.
- 3** Last year, the American Library Association recorded 1,247 book ban challenges targeting 4,240 unique book titles — the highest number since the organization began recording data in 2000.

FAQ

Q: What is “critical race theory,” or CRT, and why has it come under fire?

A: Critical race theory, or CRT, is a framework developed by legal academics that is focused on how racism is deeply ingrained in and shapes American institutions and society. The term “critical race theory” has been co-opted by conservative activists as a catch-all term to apply broadly to progressive ideas about race and racism, gender identity, sexuality, and sexism. At their core, anti-CRT laws are thinly veiled attempts to silence disfavored views about race, gender, and sexuality amongst students and educators. These laws suppress free speech and deny people the right to an accurate, complete, and inclusive learning environment.

Q: Is banning books a violation of the First Amendment?

A: The First Amendment protects our right to receive information and share ideas free from viewpoint-based censorship. The government can't ban books in public schools or libraries just because it dislikes the ideas contained in those books, nor may it do so for partisan, political, or viewpoint-based reasons. That is a violation of the First Amendment.

Q: How are banning books in schools and libraries, and classroom censorship racial justice issues?

A: The majority of recent book bans target books by Black and LGBTQ authors. These books are being targeted because they specifically discuss race, gender, and/or sexual identity from the viewpoint of an author or character who is a person of color, an immigrant, queer, or otherwise from a marginalized community.

Q: Why is it important to defend the right to learn and read free from censorship?

A: Having the freedom to read what we want, explore new ideas, and encounter a variety of perspectives ensures that we all have the ability to read, learn, and form our own opinions. This includes having the opportunity to engage with the history, experiences, and viewpoints of our diverse communities, both inside and outside of school. All young people deserve to see themselves and the issues that impact them reflected in their classroom curricula and libraries. They also deserve to be given the tools and space to develop their own critical thinking skills.

Conversation Starters

- ★ Imagine being in a classroom where your history teacher, because of classroom censorship laws, is prohibited from teaching and even talking about critical pieces of U.S. history, including our country's history of slavery and how it continues to impact Black communities today.
- ★ The book "All Boys Aren't Blue," by George Johnson, in which the author talks about their experience growing up Black and queer in the book, is being targeted for removal in at least 14 states.



Key Points

- 1 People who are immigrants are integral to the fabric of our nation. For decades, our country has been a beacon of hope for people fleeing violence, persecution, humanitarian disasters, and more.
- 2 Our immigration system is broken, but "tough-on-border" policies that harm people seeking a better life are not the way forward. These policies only cause chaos to residents on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.
- 3 When anti-immigrant extremists peddle falsehoods and racist tropes about an "invasion" to instill fear and win support for harmful policies, they do nothing to make our communities safer. Instead, they expose people who are immigrants and people of color to violence in our communities.
- 4 In all the partisan politics, we are losing track of the fact that we're talking about people – fathers, daughters, neighbors, and cousins – seeking the welcome, safety, and opportunity our country promises.

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It's time our elected leaders champion policies that will actually meet the needs of the current moment. That includes hiring more immigration judges to address the immigration case backlog, increasing processing capacity at ports of entry, and providing additional resources to cities receiving migrants.

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It also means increasing more legal pathways to the United States and providing a roadmap to citizenship for longtime residents who are undocumented.

FAQ

Q: What is asylum?

A: The right to seek asylum — or safety from persecution — in another country was born out of the tragedies of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust. Today, asylum protections remain critical, with more people forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations than at any other point since World War II. Elected officials in both parties have claimed that restrictive asylum policies discourage migrants from coming to the border, but they are wrong: new restrictions sometimes result in a temporary dip, but not a lasting reduction. And ultimately, such policies create more disorder and expose people to serious harm.

Q: Many immigrants have lived in the U.S. for decades. Aren't people seeking asylum cutting the line? Shouldn't they be starting their new lives here the "right" way?

A: Elected officials and news outlets often mischaracterize those seeking asylum at the border as breaking the law or failing to seek protection "the right way." But U.S. law recognizes that a person running for their life cannot wait in danger to schedule an appointment to apply for asylum. Under U.S. law, a person seeking asylum may do so by arriving at the border and asking for protection. At the same time, many immigrants do arrive with prior permission or through another legal pathway and still get caught up in a system that is overdue for fixing.

Q: I've been hearing so much about immigration contributing to the fentanyl crisis and crime in our communities. Shouldn't we have policies that limit immigration to combat these issues?

A: Let's be clear: people seeking a better life are not the ones bringing drugs to our country – drug cartels are responsible for that. At the same time, studies show that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born citizens. Instead of fear-mongering for political gain, elected officials should work together to solve these problems. We need programs that stop crime before it happens, like treatment for mental health issues and drug addiction. And we need a fair, orderly, and humane immigration system that meets the needs at the border and provides pathways to citizenship

for longtime residents. These proven solutions will keep families together and make our communities safer.

Q: What about other issues affecting Americans, like the economy, public safety, and homelessness? Why should I care about immigrants' rights if I'm not an immigrant?

A: Immigrants are our friends, neighbors, and co-workers. They are integral members of our communities and the backbone of our economy, yet extremist politicians have repeatedly sought to scapegoat migrants to score political points. We cannot allow nativist rhetoric and fear-mongering to shape our immigration policies. For decades, our country has been a safe haven for people seeking refuge and we must not abandon our nation's values or moral commitments to protect people fleeing danger.

Conversation Starters

- ★ Despite conventional political wisdom, “tough-on-border” and “tough-on-immigration” policies are not popular with voters. In fact, the majority of voters agree we need a humane and balanced approach to immigration that manages the border and includes a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and longtime residents.
- ★ People who are immigrants don’t drain our country – they fuel it. They contribute so much to our communities and nearly saved our economy from a recession following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Time to Fight for Your Rights

This November let’s remind our elected officials that they don’t have the final say when it comes to our rights – we do. We know you’re ready to vote and take action, make sure your friends and family are ready too.

To find out how each elected official plays a key role in defending our rights, visit:

[aclu.org/vote](https://www.aclu.org/vote)

Share this guide with others so that they can engage their circles too.

ACLU

The ACLU dares to create a more perfect union — beyond one person, party, or side. Our mission is to realize this promise of the United States Constitution for all and expand the reach of its guarantees.