



The Role of State Attorneys General in Protecting Safe Access to Abortion Clinics

Background

State attorneys general who seek to uphold the law to ensure access to medical care, including abortion services, have undertaken a range of measures to safeguard facilities, patients, and clinic staff from intimidation, harassment, and violence.

At the federal level, Congress passed the [Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act](#) (FACE Act) in 1994 to address the violence faced by individuals obtaining and providing abortion care and other reproductive health services. The law guarantees unimpeded and secure access to reproductive health facilities. Under the FACE Act, the federal government can bring criminal charges or civil claims in cases involving obstruction, property damage, threats, firearms, or arson that aim to disrupt reproductive health care services. States attorneys general are also empowered to enforce the federal FACE Act by seeking civil remedies such as injunctive relief or monetary damages.

In addition, states such as [California](#) and [New York](#) have [enacted their own versions](#) of the FACE Act that allow state authorities, like attorneys general, to bring state-law charges to further protect clinics.

Examples of State Attorneys General Actions

In June 2023, **New York Attorney General Letitia James** [filed a lawsuit against Red Rose Rescue](#), an extremist anti-abortion group. The lawsuit alleges that the group violated both the federal and state versions of the FACE Act by invading clinics, threatening staff and medical practitioners, and terrorizing patients. Specifically, Red Rose Rescue and its members trespassed and physically obstructed access to services in an attempt to halt clinic operations.

In July 2022, **New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin** and U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey Philip Sellinger [established a state-federal collaboration to ensure reproductive health care access](#) for residents of New Jersey and non-residents seeking care in the state. This partnership is a commitment to continue to enforce the FACE Act and to enhance security for health care providers, protect health care workers, and maintain data privacy. As part of this effort, Attorney General Platkin's office awarded security funding to 28 health facilities as part of a the [Reproductive Health Security Grant Program](#) and issued [guidance](#) to all county

prosecutors in New Jersey, outlining potential charges against those interfering with access to abortion rights.

In October 2022, **Connecticut Attorney General William Tong** [announced the state's participation in a pro bono Legal Assistance Abortion Hotline](#). The pro bono hotline program engages trained private attorneys to provide free legal support and representation to abortion patients and providers who have questions about their rights to access and offer abortion services, including clinic security questions.

These actions represent just a small sampling of those undertaken by state attorneys general to protect reproductive healthcare access and clinic safety.

The Leadership Center for Attorney General Studies is a non-partisan organization dedicated to educating the public about the important role state attorneys general play in addressing pressing issues, enforcing laws, and bringing about change.