

Governor's office says order suspending 'non-essential' surgery includes surgical abortions

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Gov. Kim Reynolds' office on Friday said the governor's proclamation this week to [suspend non-essential medical procedures](#) ([/story/news/health/2020/03/26/iowa-governor-kim-reynolds-daily-covid-19-news-conference-coronavirus/2914636001/](#)) in the state in response to the coronavirus outbreak includes surgical abortions, an interpretation that would mirror recent efforts in a handful of conservative states.

Pat Garrett, a spokesman for Reynolds, confirmed the governor's orders through a one-sentence statement to the Des Moines Register.

"Proclamation suspends all nonessential or elective surgeries and procedures until April 16th, that includes surgical abortion procedures," he said in an email.

Reynolds' move will mix a national political debate about women's reproductive health into the state's ongoing response to coronavirus. Reynolds, a Republican, has long been vocal about her opposition to abortion. She has supported [legislation](#) ([/story/news/politics/2020/02/13/iowa-senate-passes-anti-abortion-constitutional-amendment/4748213002/](#)) in the Iowa Legislature over the years that would restrict the legal procedure.

Erin Davison-Rippey, executive director for Planned Parenthood North Central States, Iowa's local affiliate to the national organization, said in a statement Friday: "We are assessing the executive order in light of the Governor's comments today."

► **More:** [The latest on the coronavirus outbreak in Iowa](#) ([/story/news/health/2020/03/23/latest-covid-19-news-iowa-coronavirus-updates-map-cancellations-number-cases/2894061001/](#))

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Reynolds' proclamation, [issued Thursday](#) ([/story/news/health/2020/03/26/iowa-governor-kim-reynolds-daily-covid-19-news-conference-coronavirus/2914636001/](#)), said all non-essential or elective surgeries and procedures that utilize personal protective equipment, or PPE, "must not be conducted by any hospital, outpatient surgery provider or outpatient procedure provider, whether public, private or nonprofit."

In the days since the proclamation was released, Reynolds made no public comments that indicated she also meant surgical abortions.

Her proclamation, which includes dental procedures, is in response to a shortage nationwide of medical supplies needed to test and treat coronavirus patients. COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the virus, has infected at [least 298 people in the state](#) ([/story/news/2020/03/10/coronavirus-iowa-map-how-many-cases-there-and-where-they/5009556002/](#)) as of Saturday. State public health officials have announced [three related deaths](#) ([/story/news/health/2020/03/27/iowa-governor-kim-reynolds-daily-covid-19-news-conference-coronavirus/2924792001/](#)).

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ans in abortion cases involving the life of the pregnant woman, or other medical
or procedure as "one that can be delayed without undue risk to the current or future

That includes considering "all appropriate factors" including but not limited to:

- Threat to the patient's life if the surgery or procedure is not performed.
- Threat of permanent dysfunction of an extremity or organ system.
- Risk of metastasis or progression of staging.
- Risk of rapidly worsening to severe symptoms.

Reynolds' actions follow efforts in states like [Ohio](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ohio-abortion-clinics-coronavirus-shut-down-not-essential/) and [Texas](https://www.texastribune.org/2020/03/23/texas-stops-most-abortions-during-coronavirus-outbreak/), where attorneys general have announced similar directives in recent days.

[An emergency lawsuit was filed in federal court](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/emaconnor/planned-parenthood-lawsuit-texas-abortion-ban-coronavirus) this week to overturn the order in Texas.

A spokesman for Attorney General Tom Miller declined to comment on the order Saturday.

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, along with other medical organizations, have said [they do not support](https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2020/03/joint-statement-on-abortion-access-during-the-covid-19-outbreak) states' efforts to cancel or delay abortion procedures.

"Abortion is an essential component of comprehensive health care. It is also a time-sensitive service for which a delay of several weeks, or in some cases days, may increase the risks or potentially make it completely inaccessible. The consequences of being unable to obtain an abortion profoundly impact a person's life, health, and well-being," the groups said in a statement.



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