



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 280		DATE: 1/28/2025	
COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C."HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 11:46 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: BEATRICE CHURCH		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: beatrice.churchmo@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 2:58 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 243 and HB 280. My name is Beatrice Church, and I am here to advocate for the Deaf women who are disproportionately harmed by the prohibition on dissolving marriages during pregnancy. The prohibition on dissolving a marriage during pregnancy creates significant harm, especially for Deaf women. Many Deaf individuals face barriers to accessing critical resources, such as legal assistance, shelters, or counseling services. These barriers are amplified by communication challenges, a lack of interpreters, and systemic inequities that often leave Deaf women isolated in situations of domestic abuse, neglect, or financial instability. By preventing the dissolution of marriage during pregnancy, the current law traps women, including Deaf women, in harmful environments. Instead of being able to prioritize their health and safety and prepare for the arrival of their child, they are forced to remain in legally binding relationships that may perpetuate trauma and limit their access to independence. This bill is not about undermining the significance of marriage or family; it is about giving pregnant women the path to make decisions that are in their best interest and the best interest of their unborn child. Deaf women are often impacted because they often lack immediate access to resources like legal aid due to communication barriers. I urge you to consider the real-life implications of this bill. It provides a pathway for women to take control of their lives and ensure they are not left in a vulnerable situation during one of the most critical times of their lives. For Deaf women, who already face so many obstacles, this bill would mean protection, autonomy, and the opportunity to build a safer future for themselves and their children. Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly urge you to support HB 243 and HB 280.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: ELLIE BLEDSOE		PHONE NUMBER: 314-531-7526	
REPRESENTING: PLANNED PARENTHOOD GREAT RIVERS ACTION		TITLE: INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS	
ADDRESS: 4251 FOREST PARK AVE			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63108
EMAIL: ellie.bledsoe@ppgr.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 1:05 PM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GINA MEYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: jemeyer1955@comcast.net	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 5:15 AM

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Please allow pregnant women the equal right to end their marriage. It is shameful that pregnant women are second-class citizens without autonomy over their marriage status in the state of Missouri. Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KIM SNODGRASS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kimsnodgrass79@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 8:02 AM
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My name Kim Snodgrass. I'm a voter in Missouri, and I ask you to support HB280 to give pregnant women the legal right to end their marriage. When or how someone chooses to end their marriage is an individual choice. The government should not become involved in this decision.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kortniehuddleston@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 7:47 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I am writing to urge your support for HB243 (Williams) and HB280 (Proudie), which seek to allow courts to grant a judgment of dissolution of marriage or legal separation for pregnant individuals. Currently, in Missouri, a pregnant person or their spouse can file for divorce, but the divorce cannot be finalized until after the child is born. This delay can have devastating consequences, particularly in cases involving intimate partner violence. Tragically, homicide is the leading cause of death for pregnant women in the United States, with pregnant women more likely to be murdered during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth than to die from obstetric complications. Many of these preventable deaths are linked to the dangerous intersection of intimate partner violence and access to firearms. Preventing a pregnant person from divorcing an abusive spouse often exacerbates the risk of preterm birth and other pregnancy-related complications. Studies show that intimate partner violence increases the likelihood of delayed or missed prenatal care, as abusive partners may restrict their spouses from leaving the home or the victims may avoid appointments due to fear or visible injuries. Intimate partner violence during pregnancy is also associated with higher rates of preterm labor, low birth weight, miscarriage, and abortion. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that about 25% of women who experience physical or sexual abuse by a partner also face reproductive coercion, which includes tactics like sabotaging contraception or marital rape to force pregnancy. This strategy is often used by abusive partners to trap their spouses in violent relationships, particularly in states like Missouri where divorce cannot be finalized during pregnancy. Missouri's current laws create a dangerous situation: pregnant individuals cannot finalize divorces, abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence retain access to firearms, and abortion is banned. This combination puts lives at risk. HB243 and HB280 are critical steps toward addressing these issues, and I strongly urge you to support these vital measures.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LISA SNODGRASS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: l.snodgrass09@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 9:41 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My name is Lisa Snodgrass, I'm a voter in Missouri, and I ask you to support HB280 to give pregnant women the legal right to end their marriage. The government should have no say when a marriage should be ended period between two adults to entered into it willingly. The idea that at this time, a pregnant person is not allowed to divorce their partner is disgusting and another example of gross overstep of power. Not allowing pregnant persons to leave a marriage upon their own will is once again defining choices for women that belittle and remove their personhood. Pregnant women are citizens who have civil rights and denying them of the right to leave a marriage for whatever reason they themselves determine is no longer a marriage but a form of prison and enslavement. **WOMEN, PREGNANT WOMEN ARE NOT PROPERTY!** Government officials have no idea nor insight into these marriages, why the parties are seeking a divorce or anything that led to those actions. They are in no other way shape or form involved in the marriage. For anyone to think they have any opinion in unions they did not enter into themselves with their own partner they have no right nor ground to stand on. How dare anyone believe they as a political appointee of the people have any say over a marriage they are not entered into themselves. If you as public servant believe you do have such a right then admit to yourselves and your constituents that you view women as property to be controlled and not citizens of this nation. Those in marriages did not marry our MO government nor any of our representatives. They entered into a union with one other individual. When or how I choose to end my marriage is my choice not anyone else!



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MAGGIE OLIVIA EDMONDSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: ABORTION ACTION MISSOURI		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 1210 S VANDEVENTER AVE			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63110
EMAIL: maggie@abortionactionmissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 8:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MATTHEW HUFFMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 888-666-1911	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 217 OSCAR DR. SUITE A			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: libertytree.cottage976@passinbox.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 9:35 AM
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I SUPPORT HB 280 as originally filed.			



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mdreyer93@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 7:44 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I am writing to urge your support for HB243 (Williams) and HB280 (Proudie), which propose enabling the court to issue a judgment of dissolution of marriage or legal separation for pregnant individuals. Presently, in Missouri, a pregnant individual or their spouse can initiate divorce proceedings, but the divorce cannot be finalized until after the birth of the child. Tragically, homicide ranks as the leading cause of death among pregnant women in the US, with a higher likelihood of women being murdered during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth compared to the leading obstetric causes of maternal death. A significant portion of these preventable homicides are linked to the deadly combination of intimate partner violence and firearms. Denying a pregnant person the ability to divorce an abusive spouse often heightens the risk of preterm birth and other pregnancy complications. Research indicates that intimate partner violence increases the likelihood of delayed or nonexistent prenatal care, either because abusive partners prevent pregnant spouses from leaving their homes or because fear of abuse or evidence of injuries discourages pregnant individuals from attending appointments. Intimate partner violence during pregnancy is also associated with increased rates of preterm labor, low birth weight, miscarriage, and abortion. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, approximately 25% of women experiencing physical or sexual abuse from their partners also report reproductive coercion, which involves being forced into pregnancy through various means such as sabotaging contraception or marital rape. This tactic is frequently employed by abusive partners to trap their spouses in violent relationships, particularly in states like Missouri where finalizing divorce during pregnancy is prohibited. The current legal landscape in Missouri poses a perilous situation. Pregnant individuals are unable to finalize divorces, abusive partners convicted of misdemeanor domestic abuse retain firearm rights, and abortion is outlawed. This combination jeopardizes the lives of Missourians. HB243 and HB280 represent a crucial step towards rectifying these issues, and I implore you to lend your support to these important measures.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN GIBSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: Onesuegibson@protonmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/26/2025 12:17 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TIRSA WOODSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: tearsa1@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 7:19 AM
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I want a divorce. Everyday I am use a punching bag. I have suffered with sexually transmitted diseases. I have been forced to have sex with male friends. I have been beaten, body slammed, and kicked down the stairs while 4 months pregnant. My life and unborn child's life was threatened, I will be murdered. I have the right to choose to leave this marriage alive so my unborn child can strive on the inside and live it's life unharmed. To deny my petition for dissolution of marriage means you have given me and my child a death sentence.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOSHUA WILCUTT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: joshua.wilcutt@live.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 10:44 PM

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I beleive this legislation as it stands needs to be modified. In Missouri, husband's are presumed to be the child's father. In cases of infidelity, this would could cause issues forcing a man to pay support for a child that is not theirs. If the woman receives any benefit from the state, the state would move to garnish the man's wages, even if the woman clarifys the child is not the husband's. For this reason I oppose this Bill. I beleive clarity is needed in this bill to protect husband's from any adverse actions in the cases of infidelity.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: BRIDGETTE DUNLAP		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: bridgettedunlap@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 4:08 PM
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I am a lawyer and journalist who has researched and written about the ability of pregnant parties to divorce in Missouri and throughout the country. I believe that, as currently drafted, the identical bills HB 243, HB 280, HB 848, and SB 93 would harm the people their sponsors seek to protect. First, the bill maintains and seemingly endorses the dangerous and unnecessary requirement in 452.310 that a divorce petition state "whether the wife is pregnant." This is a requirement adopted by Missouri and many other states in the 1970s with the intent of ensuring that divorcing fathers would support future children of the marriage. However, it is not necessary to require this disclosure at the filing stage. Approximately half of U.S. states do not do so. Requiring disclosure of pregnancy in order to start the divorce process is dangerous for those experiencing or at risk of domestic violence. Pregnancy increases one's risk of being a victim of homicide significantly. Furthermore, this requirement has been widely misinterpreted by the media and women who were deterred from leaving abusive marriages to mean either that pregnant women can't even file for divorce or that Missouri law bars judges from finalizing a divorce during pregnancy regardless of the circumstances. Second, the bill's bar to considering pregnancy status will harm pregnant parties. For most pregnant individuals, it will be to their benefit to wait to finalize a divorce so that paternity, custody, and child support obligations can be established. Putting in law that pregnancy "shall not prevent the court from entering a judgment" gives a husband who wants the divorce granted immediately the ability to force his wife to come back to court later to address his child support obligations. It will also cause the pregnant party to lose her health insurance if she is on her husband's plan. There is no provision of Missouri law that bars a judge from granting a divorce decree to a pregnant party when warranted. Indeed, I am aware of cases in which Missouri judges have done so. My understanding from conversations with divorce practitioners is that some judges are uncomfortable using their discretion under current law to grant divorces during pregnancy and lawyers are hesitant to ask them. The solution to this problem is not to limit judges' existing discretion. A pregnant party may have good reason to want her pregnancy taken into account. The titles of HB 243, HB 280, and HB 848, "Allows the court to enter a judgment of dissolution of marriage or legal separation if a person is pregnant" wrongly suggest that courts are not currently allowed to enter a judgment during pregnancy. This risks exacerbating the problem of judges being disinclined to do so. My approach would be to (1) remove the requirement for disclosure at filing and (2) recognize in a preamble or legislative findings that courts already have the discretion to finalize divorces during pregnancy when warranted. The idea that "pregnant women in Missouri can't leave abusive husbands" has gone viral. This is a misperception that could get someone killed. I urge the committee to avoid furthering this misunderstanding as you seek a targeted solution to the difficulties pregnant women face when divorcing. For further discussion see Bridgette Dunlap, No, Missouri law does not require a pregnant woman to stay with her husband, Missouri Independent, June 24, 2024; Bridgette Dunlap, We can raise the alarm about bad laws without telling women they are powerless,

Missouri Independent, Sep. 3, 2024.