



KENNEDY CENTER

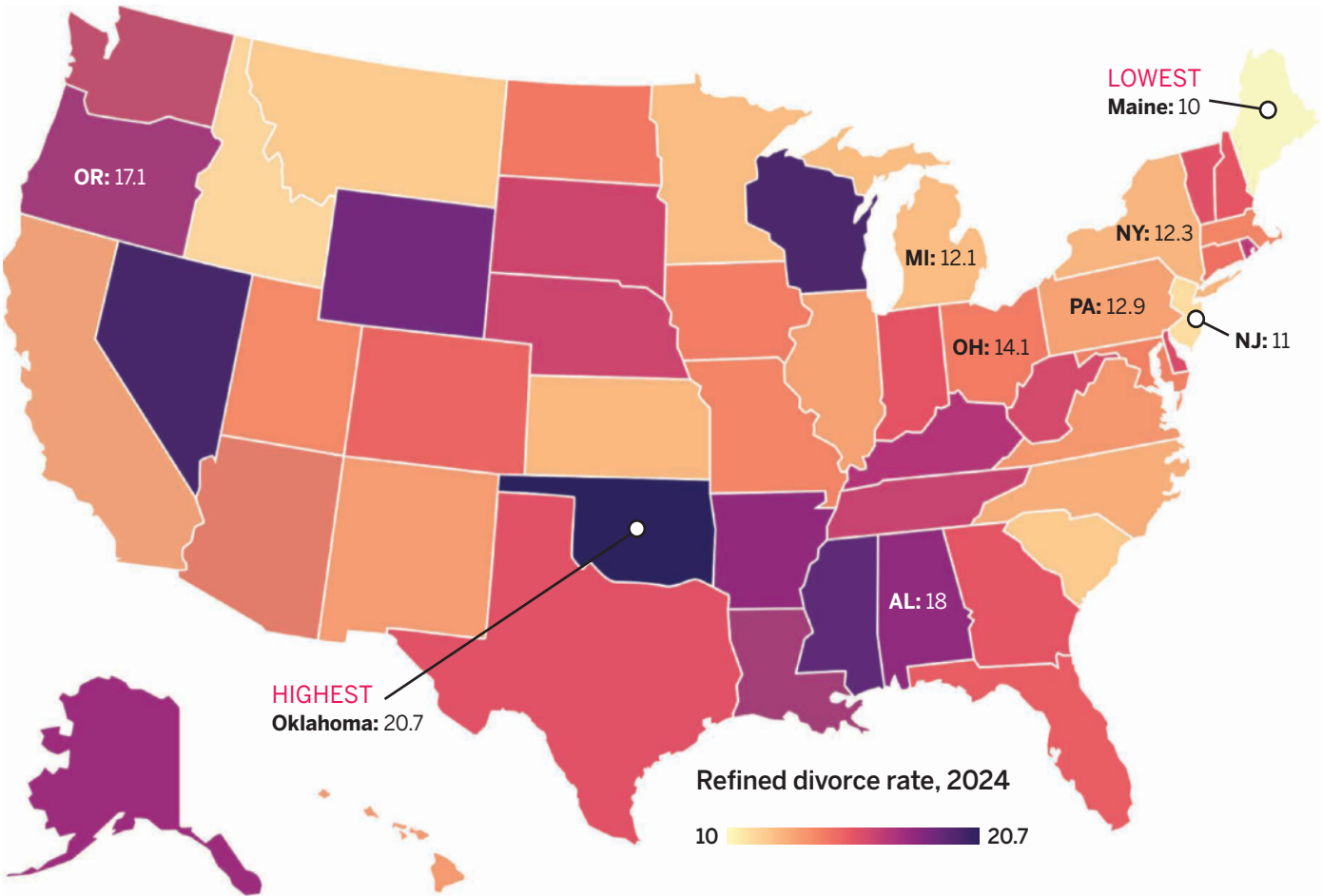
THE KENNEDY CENTER BOARD VOTES TO CLOSE MOST OF THE ICONIC PERFORMING ARTS VENUE AFTER A JUDGE BLOCKED THE INSTITUTION FROM RETURNING THE PRESIDENT’S NAME TO THE BUILDING. **B1**

STATE DIVORCE LAWS

Divorce becomes next battleground as states debate ‘family values’

DIVORCE RATES BY STATE

The refined divorce rate represents the number of women who divorced in the past 12 months per 1,000 married women aged 15 and older. Using the refined rate as a measure of marital behavior helps account for significant variation in age and sex across state populations. Researchers report the rates for women because historical data for women has been more reliably tracked.



Sources: National Center for Family & Marriage Research analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2024; Stateline

Efforts to restrict no-fault divorce are gaining ground in some places.

Anna Claire Vollers Stateline.org

Cerina Fairfax, a Virginia dentist and mother of two, spent nearly two years living in the same house as her husband while she was trying to divorce him.

Virginia state law required couples with children, like the Fairfaxes, to wait a year before being allowed to file for divorce. Cerina’s husband, former Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, had also tried different legal tactics to prolong the process.

In March of this year, a judge granted Cerina sole custody of their children and ordered Justin to move out.

A few weeks later, with just days left before his move-out deadline, Justin fatally shot Cerina and then himself, police say, while their two teens were also in the house.

The tragedy focused national attention on state divorce laws, which have remained mostly static since 2010, when New York became the last state to allow no-fault divorce. In the years since, most of the states that have tweaked their divorce laws have made it easier, not harder, to get one. Virginia, for example, relaxed some of its requirements just days before Cerina Fairfax’s death.

Now that could be changing.

In recent years, more conservatives

have turned to divorce as a “family values” talking point, with some pushing to make it harder for couples to divorce. By doing so, they’ve relaunched a national conversation that would have been nearly unthinkable just a few years ago.

In 1969, California became the first state to allow no-fault divorce, which allows one member of a couple to file for divorce without proving that the other person engaged in wrongdoing such as adultery, abuse or abandonment.

No-fault divorce emerged from the women’s rights movement of that era, promising women greater freedom to escape from unhappy or abusive marriages.

But the loss of that freedom suddenly seems more plausible, particularly for those whose confidence in federal protections for women’s rights was shattered after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022. And as state lawmakers ramp up restrictions around birth control, fertility treatments and pregnancy loss, new limits on divorce seem less far-fetched.

“What’s different now is that it’s actually gaining some traction,” said Marcia Zug, a family law professor at the University of South Carolina School of Law whose work focuses on the legal history of marriage. “Simply the idea that we’re talking about it seriously, that it’s part of some Republican party platforms, that it’s not just laughed out of the room. Even if we’re not anywhere near eliminating it, that is the major change.”

Earlier this year, for example, an Iowa

Senate subcommittee approved a bill that would allow couples to opt out of no-fault divorce when they’re registering for marriage licenses.

“In the last generation, we have seen the chaos of — the circus of — pure no-fault divorce, (and) the ugliness of divorce and the breakdown of marriage,” Iowa state Sen. Jesse Green, a Republican, told his colleagues during a February hearing on his bill, which later died in committee.

“A lot of people are not getting married anymore because maybe, in some cases, they feel the lack of support and accountability with our law,” he said.

In Texas and Nebraska, the official state GOP platforms call for ending or limiting no-fault divorce. Other state Republican parties, such as in Louisiana, have considered similar party planks.

Republican lawmakers in states including South Carolina and South Dakota have filed bills to limit no-fault divorce or make the process harder.

Oklahoma state Sen. Dusty Deevers, a Republican and pastor, filed a bill in 2024 to abolish no-fault divorce, after saying he wanted to see public shaming for those who cause divorce.

At the same time, some prominent social media influencers have been using their platforms to call for streamlining divorce laws.

Hadley Vlahos, a Mississippi registered nurse with 2.2 million followers on TikTok, used her platform this summer to talk about her three-year-long divorce, which

the people of this commonwealth have yet another free, fair, safe and secure election this November.”

Nearly 2 million Pennsylvanians used mail-in ballots in 2024, compared with 5 million people who voted in person. President Donald Trump, who votes by mail, continued his attack on the popular method, directing USPS to restrict mail-in voting, a move that some argue usurps constitutional, congressional and state authority.

The court’s decision wasn’t unanimous, with conservative Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissenting. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, in a brief concurrence, concluded that aspects of the ruling may be legal but were unworkable in the short time frame.

Schmidt also said that the state’s existing

HEALTH

4th death related to measles reported in Pa., an 18-year-old

The state has confirmed about 700 cases this year.

Janet Pickel jpickel@pennlive.com

Four people, two adults and two children, have died of measles-related conditions this year in Pennsylvania, the state Department of Health has reported.

The most recent death was reported Tuesday by the Mifflin County coroner, who said an 18-year-old county resident died of acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, a rare and severe complication of measles.

The measles-associated death of a 40-year-old woman was reported over the weekend by Jefferson County Coroner Greg Furlong.

At least two children, both in Lancaster County, died of measles complications, according to the state. One was a newborn, the other a 6-week-old with other health issues.

None of the four was vaccinated for measles, the state Health Department said. (The children weren’t old enough to get the MMR vaccine.)

“My thoughts are with the two families who lost loved ones to this highly contagious virus, as Pennsylvania faces the worst measles outbreak in more than three decades,” Health Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen said in a news release. “We remain committed to working with our partners across Pennsylvania to stem this outbreak and prevent more deaths.

“That means ensuring people have the facts about measles and access to the MMR vaccine, which kept measles outbreaks at bay for decades.”

Until this year, Pennsylvania hadn’t had a measles-related death in 25 years.

This year, the state has confirmed 693 measles cases in 38 of its 67 counties. Pennsylvania has the largest current outbreak in the U.S.

Lancaster County leads the state with more than 200 cases.

WHAT IS MEASLES?
Measles is a highly contagious virus that

SPORTS

‘Good problem’

Nine Penn State players caught passes against Marshall and seven against Temple. Offensive coordinator Taylor Mouser likes multiple weapons. **C1**

LIFE

Emmys highlights

The Emmys Awards ceremony belonged to “Widow’s Bay” and “The Pitt.” Here are 10 of the best moments and biggest shocks of the night. **D1**

Pa. election chief praises Supreme Court ruling on mail-in ballots

Election staff is prohibited from participating in prediction market trading related to election outcomes.

Whitney Downard Pennsylvania Capital-Star

Pennsylvania’s top elections chief hailed a U.S. Supreme Court decision as a major victory for voters.

Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt said Monday’s ruling blocking the U.S. Postal Service from implementing a mail-in ballot rule before November’s crucial midterm elections is necessary to protect state elections.

“Eligible Pennsylvanians who choose to vote by mail should have confidence that they can continue to do so safely and securely,” Schmidt said in a news conference Tuesday. “The Shapiro administration fought to prevent this unprecedented overreach into Pennsylvania’s elections, and we will continue fighting to ensure that