

State House Speaker Ben Toma Extremism Spotlight

Toma co-sponsored one of the most extreme anti-abortion bills in the country which required prosecutors to charge women who opted to end their pregnancies and their physicians with murder. House Bill 2650 was introduced with language which gave county attorneys the power to prosecute “homicide by abortion,” regardless of conflicting federal laws or court decisions. According to the Arizona Republic, “The legislation, which expands the definition of a ‘person’ to include ‘an unborn child in the womb at any stage of development,’ would allow both the state attorney general and county attorneys to prosecute ‘homicide by abortion.’ It removes existing protections for ‘an unborn child’s mother’ as well as ‘the person . . . performing an abortion’ with the mother’s consent. The Arizona bill leaves open the possibility of first-degree murder charges — which can result in the death penalty or a lifetime sentence — and does not protect mothers from prosecution.” The bill eventually stalled out in committee and was not passed by the legislature. [The Arizona Republic, [1/22/2021](#); HB 2650, [Accessed 10/18/2021](#)]

Toma tried to dodge questions from the U.S. Department of Justice about allegations he enacted a voter suppression law with “discriminatory intent.” In 2023, Toma and state Senate President Warren Petersen attempted to avoid being deposed about their motives for backing legislation making it more difficult to register to vote. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected Toma and Petersen’s claim of legislative privilege without comment. The U.S. Department of Justice and civil rights groups are challenging the laws, contending they “amount to intentional race discrimination in voting,” and have sought to question Toma and Petersen to buttress their arguments. The voter laws require proof of citizenship to vote for president and require county recorders to forward to the attorney general the names of people who are suspected of trying to register to vote without being citizens, among other provisions creating barriers to voting. The Justice Department and groups seeking to void the laws want to know what evidence legislators identified that non-citizens had voted, whether the legislators considered if the laws would affect certain groups of voters more than others, and what communications they had with outside groups regarding the purpose or effects of the laws. Toma and Petersen refused to provide certain documents and declined to answer questions, objecting to disclosing “private conversations with other legislators or third parties about the voting laws.” [Arizona Daily Star, [11/27/2023](#)]

Toma supports being able to legally discriminate against LGBTQ individuals. Toma has supported allowing discrimination against LGBTQ individuals to be legal and permitting the denial of services to LGBTQ individuals. He also said he supports “parent’s right to seek professional counseling for their minor child with same-sex attraction or gender identity issues to help them reach their desired outcome.” [Stonewall Democrats of Arizona, [Accessed 2/21/2024](#)]