

# Local & Region

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People rally in support of abortion rights at the state Capitol in Sacramento, Calif., May 21, 2019. A bill announced on Thursday by Senate President Pro Team Toni Atkins, a Democrat, that would let nurse practitioners who have the required training to perform first trimester abortions without the supervision by a doctor. RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

## California could OK abortions by solo nurse practitioners

BY ADAM BEAM  
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO – A bill announced Thursday in the California Legislature would let some nurse practitioners perform abortions without the supervision of a doctor – part of a plan to prepare for a potential influx of patients from other states if the U.S. Supreme Court allows states to ban or severely restrict the procedure.

State Senate leader Toni Atkins, a Democrat from San Diego, said the goal is to increase the number of health care workers in California who can perform abortions ahead of a potential Supreme Court ruling this summer.

“As states like Texas and others start to restrict further abortion, it just makes sense that women are going to find other places to go. California will be one of those states,” she said.

Nurse practitioners are not doctors, but they have advanced degrees and can provide a number of treatments. In 2013, California passed a law allowing nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives and physician assistants to perform abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy – but only if they completed special training and were under the supervision of a doctor.

Atkins’ bill would change the law by letting nurse practitioners with the required training perform



In this Sept. 12, 2019 file photo, California state Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins of San Diego, speaks on the floor of the Senate in Sacramento, Calif. RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

first trimester abortions without a doctor’s supervision. California has about 30,000 nurse practitioners. But it’s unclear how many more of them would be allowed to perform abortions if this bill becomes law.

The U.S. Supreme Court now has a conservative majority after former President Donald Trump made three appointments during his term. Many conservative-led states have responded by passing new abortion restrictions, hoping the court will uphold them.

Texas has a law that bans nearly all abortions in the state, but it is only enforceable by civil lawsuits. Abortion rights groups have sued to block that law, but the U.S. Supreme Court has allowed the law to remain in effect while the case is pending.

Last year, the court heard arguments over whether to

uphold a Mississippi law that bans most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The court likely won’t make a decision on that case until June. But during a hearing on the case, a majority of justices indicated they were likely to uphold the law and could even overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the court’s 1973 ruling that banned states from outlawing abortion.

If the court overturns or significantly weakens the *Roe* ruling, multiple states would likely act quickly to ban or severely limit access to abortion.

But California, led by Democrats who support abortion rights, would do the opposite by passing laws to increase access to abortion. That could include helping women who live in states where abortion is banned or severely limited travel to California for care.

A proposal filed last

month would potentially use taxpayer money to help women from other states get to California by paying for things like travel, lodging, child care and food. Atkins said the government couldn’t pay for everyone, saying the bill would create a fund that would also accept private donations.

“You will see a bill that tries to set up a framework for where we can do that and take private dollars,” Atkins said.

Jonathan Keller, president and CEO of the California Family Council, called Atkins’ bill “a tragic example of the legislators putting abortion numbers above abortion safety and putting ideology above patients.”

“We are essentially treating abortion like no other health care service,” he said. “We’re not flying people from poor states to California to get heart transplants.”

A 2013 study led by the University of California-San Francisco concluded first trimester abortions are “just as safe when performed by trained nurse practitioners, physician assistants and certified nurse midwives as when conducted by physicians.”

“When we’re within our areas of training, we are absolutely qualified to provide the care that we do,” said Patti Gurney, president of the California Association for Nurse Practitioners.

## Containment of Southern California forest fire increases

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA – A wildfire in Southern California’s Cleveland National Forest was 15% contained early Thursday, and rain was in the forecast after a spell of dry, summerlike heat.

The Jim Fire had charred 553 acres (224 hectares) of chaparral and brush on the steep slopes of the Santa Ana Mountains northeast of the Orange County community of Rancho Santa Margarita. No structures were threatened.

The fire erupted Wednesday in Holy Jim Canyon and U.S. Forest Service firefighters responded, assisted by the Orange County Fire Authority and Cal Fire.

The fire’s expansion eased later in the day and little activity was observed

overnight by firefighters patrolling the perimeter and constructing containment lines, according to the Forest Service.

The fire slowed when it ran into the scar of the 2018 Holy Fire, said Capt. Steve Concialdi, an OCFA spokesman.

The massive plume that rose Wednesday was gone, but Concialdi said the fire still burned deep in the upper Trabuco Canyon area. More than 250 firefighters and three helicopters were on hand.

Showers were predicted to spread across Southern California late Thursday and into Friday morning and again Saturday.

The rain will dramatically cool the fire, Concialdi said.

“The rain is going to help,” he said.

The cause of the fire was under investigation.



A fire burns in the Cleveland National Forest in this view from Orange, Calif., on Wednesday. MARK RIGHT-MIRE/AP

## UC Berkeley ordered to freeze enrollment at 2020 levels

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The University of California, Berkeley was ordered by California’s Supreme Court on Thursday to freeze its undergraduate enrollment at 2020-21 levels, meaning it will have to accept at least 3,000 fewer students than planned for the upcoming academic year.

Thursday’s decision is the result of a legal battle with a residents group called Save Berkeley Neighborhoods that sued the university for failing to address the effect of increased student enrollment on housing, homelessness, traffic and noise.

An Alameda County Superior Court in August sided with the Berkeley residents, suspending a proposed faculty housing and classroom construc-

tion project, and ordered the campus to limit enrollment to its 2020-2021 level of just over 42,000 students.

The school sent letters to applicants saying it would need to cut undergraduate enrollment by at least 3,000 students, sending prospective students and their families into a panic.

An appeals court last month denied UC’s request to lift the enrollment freeze as the case continues. The decision prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to file a friend of the court brief asking the California Supreme Court to block the enrollment cap, saying in a statement that a lawsuit should not “get in the way of the education and dreams of thousands of students who are our future leaders and innovators.”

## Prosecutors: Woman faked kidnapping, defrauded Calif.

BY DON THOMPSON  
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO – A Northern California woman whose disappearance set off a frantic three-week search more than five years ago was arrested Thursday on charges of lying to federal agents about being kidnapped and defrauding the state’s victim compensation board of \$30,000.

Sherri Papini, 39, of Redding, was found on Thanksgiving Day in 2016 after weeks of searching in California and several nearby states, with bindings on her body and injuries including a broken nose and a “brand” on her right shoulder.

She had been reported missing Nov. 2. She told

authorities at the time that she had been kidnapped at gunpoint by two Hispanic women, even providing descriptions to an FBI sketch artist.

In reality, authorities said, she was staying with a former boyfriend nearly 600 miles (966 kilometers) away from her home in Orange County, in Southern California, and hurt herself to back up her false statements.

“When a young mother went missing in broad daylight, a community was filled with fear and concern,” U.S. Attorney Phillip Talbert said in a statement. “Ultimately, the investigation revealed that there was no kidnapping and that time and resources that could have been used to investigate actual crime, protect the

community, and provide resources to victims were wasted.”

Papini does not yet have an attorney because she was just arrested, Talbert’s office said. Her first court appearance has not yet been set.

She was still lying about the kidnapping in August 2020 when she was interviewed by a federal agent and a Shasta County sheriff’s detective, the charges allege. They showed her evidence indicating she had not been abducted and warned her that it was a crime to lie to a federal agent.

But she still made false statements, the charges allege.

She also was reimbursed more than \$30,000 by the California Victim’s Compensation Board based on

the false story, the charges said. They included money for visits to her therapist and for the ambulance ride to the hospital after she surfaced near Sacramento.

She faces a mail fraud charge related to the reimbursement requests that carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison, while lying to a federal officer has a maximum five-year sentence.

“Everyone involved in this investigation had one common goal: to find the truth about what happened on Nov. 2, 2016, with Sherri Papini and who was responsible,” said Shasta County Sheriff Michael Johnson.

That 22-day search and five-year investigation not only cost money and time, he said, “but caused the general public to be fearful

of their own safety, a fear that they should not have had to endure.”

Before she disappeared, Papini had gone jogging near her home about 215 miles (350 kilometers) north of San Francisco. Her husband, Keith Papini, found only her cellphone and earphones when he went searching after she failed to pick up their children at day care.

Investigators said he passed a lie detector test. They also cleared a Detroit man they said Papini had texted and planned to meet shortly before her disappearance.

Papini’s nose was broken and she was wearing a chain restraint around her waist when she was found alongside Interstate 5 about 100 miles from her home. Her blonde hair

had been cut to shoulder length and she had a “brand” burned into her right shoulder, authorities said at the time.

She had both male and female DNA on her body and clothing. But the DNA eventually led to the former boyfriend, according to a court filing.

At the time she was a stay-at-home mom and her husband worked at Best Buy. There was never a ransom demand and the family wasn’t wealthy, officials said at the time.

In retrospect, “we are relieved that the community is not endangered by unknown, violent kidnappers,” said Sean Ragan, special agent in charge of the FBI’s Sacramento Field Office.