

Rep. Keltie



COLORADO
SAFE HAVEN
FOR NEWBORNS

Fact Sheet: Extending Colorado Safe Haven Law to 30 Days

Colorado's Safe Haven Law (2000) currently allows parents to surrender an infant up to 72 hours old. While this law has saved 99 lives, 41 illegal abandonments, and 34 deaths have still occurred since its enactment.

Why Change is Needed

- Colorado is one of only 6 states still limited to 72 hours.
- 10 states allow between 4 and 29 days.
- 22 states allow 30 days.
- 12 states allow more than 31 days.

Supporting Evidence

- Maternal mental health: Hormonal shifts at 5-7 days postpartum increase crisis vulnerability.
- State comparison: South Carolina (60 days) averages nearly twice as many safe surrenders as Colorado.
- CDC data: Infants remain at elevated risk of homicide during the first month of life.
- Clinical studies: Safely surrendered infants often show drug exposure and medical needs.

Conclusion

Extending Colorado's surrender window to 30 days aligns with national standards, better reflects maternal health realities, and expands safe, life-saving options for families in crisis.



COLORADO **SAFE HAVEN** FOR NEWBORNS

Proposal to Extend Colorado Safe Haven Surrender Period to 30 Days

Background

Colorado enacted its Safe Haven law in 2000, permitting parents to legally and anonymously surrender a newborn up to 72 hours old. Since then, 99 newborns have been safely surrendered, yet at least 41 infants have been illegally abandoned, and 34 have died as a result of unsafe abandonment. While the law has saved lives, Colorado's current 72-hour timeframe is among the most restrictive in the nation.

Current National Context

Colorado is now an outlier. Only six states still limit safe surrender to 72 hours. Ten states allow between 4 and 29 days, twenty-two states allow 30 days, and twelve states allow more than 31 days. The National Safe Haven Alliance has called for a federal standard requiring at least 30 days, but no more than 60 days, to align state laws.

Evidence and Proxy Data Supporting Expansion

There is no direct evidence that extending surrender timeframes reduces abandonment or infant mortality; however, proxy data strongly support expansion beyond 72 hours:

- **Maternal Mental Health:** Hormonal shifts occur at 5–7 days postpartum, often triggering emotional distress and postpartum depression.
- **State Comparisons:** South Carolina (60 days) averages nearly twice the annual surrenders as Colorado, despite similar demographics.
- **CDC data:** the highest risk of infant homicide is on the day of birth, but rates remain elevated through the first month.
- **Clinical Vulnerability:** Studies highlight high rates of drug exposure and specialized needs among surrendered infants, underscoring the need for flexibility.
- **Texas Case Study:** Texas expanded its surrender period to 60 days without evidence of harm.

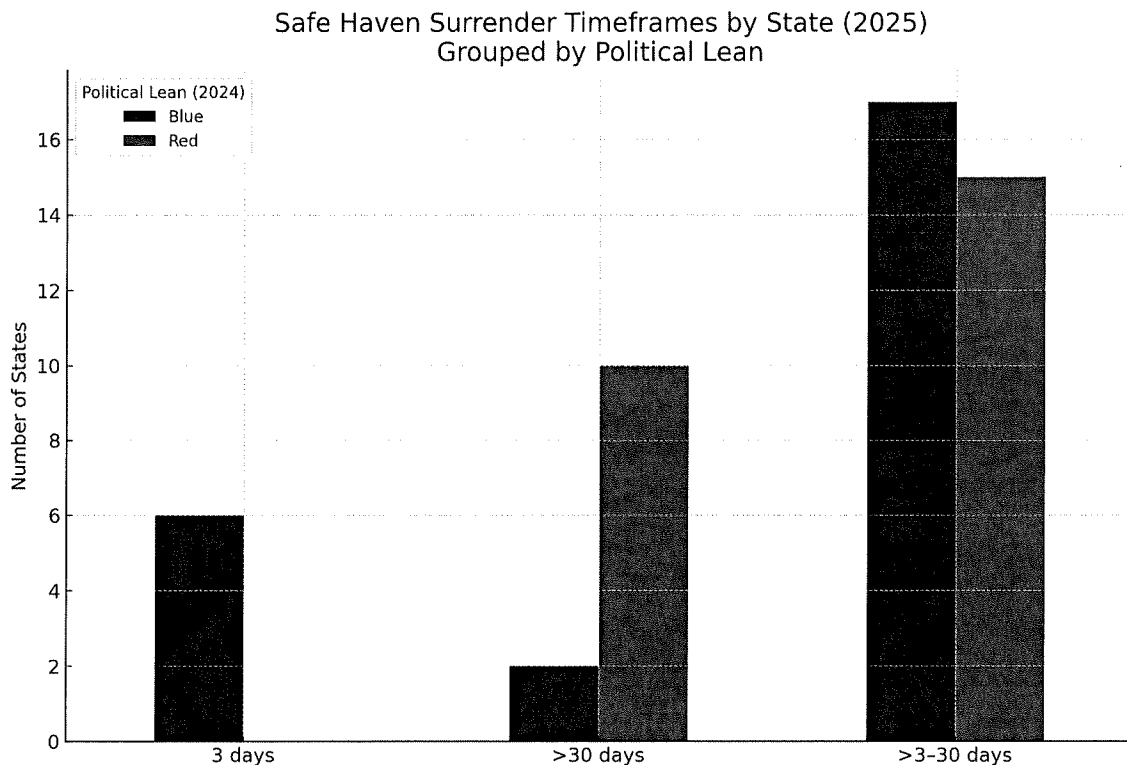
Public Health and Health Equity Considerations

Infant abandonment is closely linked to structural inequities such as poverty, unstable housing, and lack of access to healthcare. Parents in crisis need time, privacy, and safe options. Extending Colorado's timeframe aligns with health equity frameworks, ensuring mothers are not forced into unsafe decisions in the immediate postpartum period.

Conclusion

Colorado's Safe Haven law has saved lives, but too many infants continue to be unsafely abandoned. Expanding the surrender window to 30 days modernizes Colorado's law, aligns with national norms, and provides mothers with additional time to make safe decisions.

Duration/State & Political Lean



- 3 days – Blue: CA, CO, HI, WA, WI, MI
- 3 days – Red: (none)
- >3-30 days – Blue: CT, DE, NJ, OR, PA, etc.
- >3-30 days – Red: TX, FL, NC, OH, etc.
- >30 days – Blue: NV, NM
- >30 days – Red: AL, LA, SC, etc.

References

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