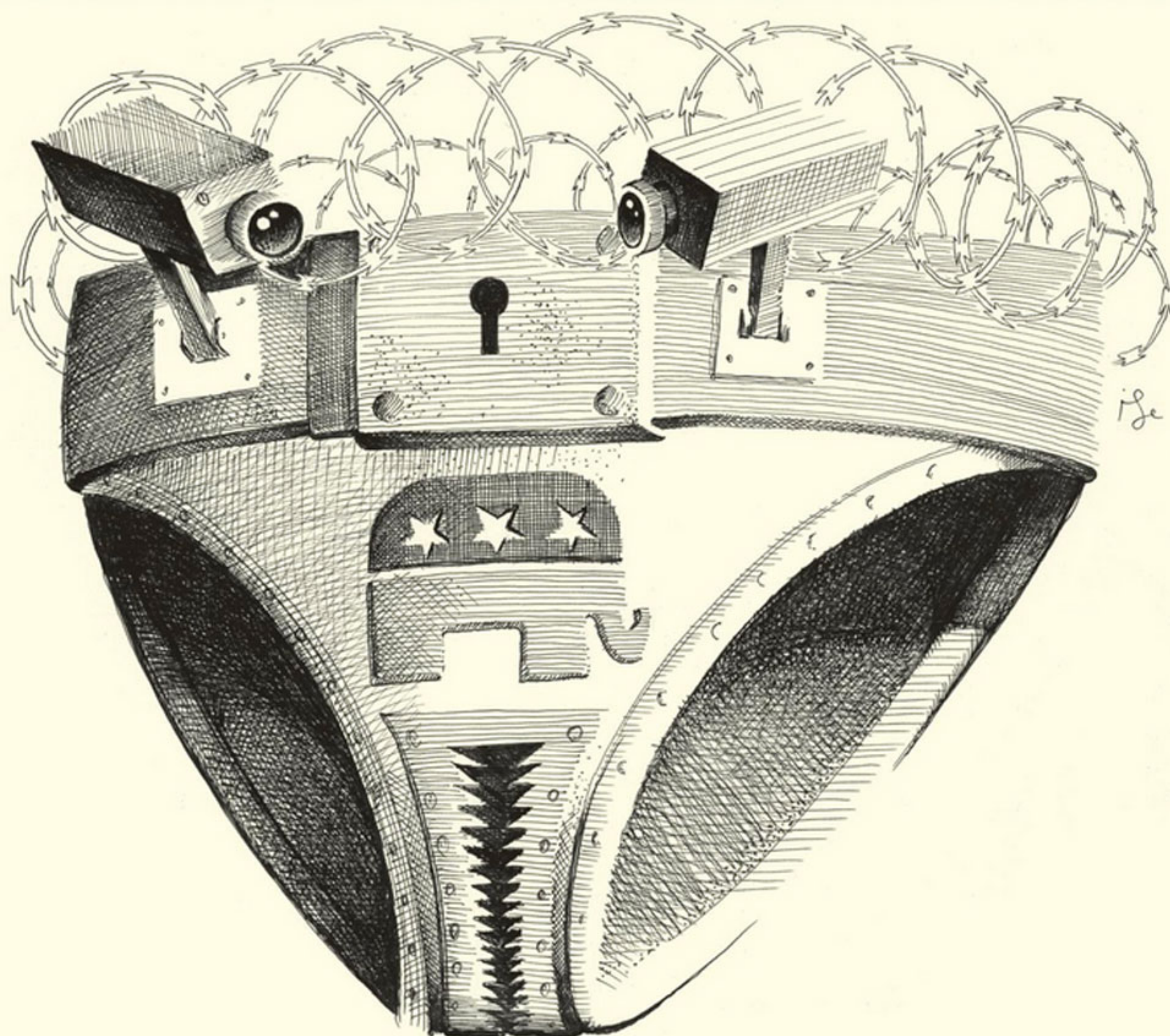


Reproductive rights *Church vs. state* DNA myths



THE WAR ON SEX

Despite the social progress of the past decade, puritanical politicians are still in your business

BY NANCY L. COHEN

You'd think the GOP would have learned not to meddle in our sex lives. But that's not the case: In red states, Republican politicians are

cracking down on abortion, sex education, access to birth control—even divorce. It's as if the 2012 election never happened.

Consider Virginia, where Republican attorney general Ken Cuccinelli pursued a felony sodomy conviction against a man who'd solicited oral sex from a female. Sodomy laws are unconstitutional, of course, something the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals had to remind Cuccinelli of not once but twice. North Carolina Republican lawmakers introduced a bill that would send couples to marriage counseling and

enact a two-year waiting period before they would be allowed to divorce. Ohio Republicans want to slap sex-ed teachers with a \$5,000 fine if they talk about "gateway sexual activity" in a way that leads

students to "any touching of an erogenous zone... for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person." South Dakota got creative with the concept of time: Weekends and holidays no longer count toward the 72 hours a woman must wait before having an abortion.

The Republican antisex police are on the march. Don't worry; unhappily married Tar Heels can still avail themselves of a no-fault divorce, and oral sex remains safe in the land of Jefferson. But antisodomy crusader Cuccinelli has a fighting chance of becoming Virginia's

Seven out of 10 Americans believe Roe should be the law of the land.

READER RESPONSE

DEATH FROM AFAR

After reading "Death by Drone" (May), I still don't understand the problem. The president ordered the killing of two pro-Al Qaeda operatives who were recruiting for jihad against the U.S. and who happened to be U.S. citizens. Here in Florida,



where it appears most folks are armed, the killing of citizens without due process by members of the police force and citizenry seems to be an almost nightly event, often based on skin color and the wearing of a hoodie.

Allen Smith
Port St. Lucie, Florida

When Samir Khan made threats against this country, he became a criminal. When he left our borders and surrounded himself with terrorists, he became a terrorist. As my rodeo buddies say, "Mess with the bull, you get the horns."

Bob Blair
Tampa, Florida



ANTISODOMY CRUSADER KEN CUCCINELLI COULD BECOME VIRGINIA'S NEXT GOVERNOR.

next governor come November. In the first half of 2013, more than 450 provisions were introduced in state legislatures to restrict access to abortion, birth control and sex education, according to the non-partisan Guttmacher Institute.

To the women and men who hold the front lines to protect sexual freedom and the right to decide if and when to have children, this feels like a game of whack-a-mole. After all, the 2012 election was in part a referendum on the GOP's retrograde positions on women, gays and sexual rights. Single women and young men—the groups with the most to lose if Mitt Romney had won—voted for Barack Obama and Democratic Senate candidates by commanding margins. Yet even as Obama was coasting to reelection on a 5 million vote margin, Republicans ended the night with rock-solid control in 25 states, the result of gerrymandering effected by Tea Party Republicans.

Unsurprisingly, a woman's right to a legal abortion remains the main target of Republican governors and state lawmakers. Fourteen states considered bills to ban abortion before fetal viability. Personhood measures—which prohibit abortion from the moment sperm meets egg and could outlaw some forms of birth control—moved forward in eight states. These laws are unconstitutional; their purpose is to tee up a Supreme Court review of *Roe v. Wade*, the case that guaranteed a woman's right to a legal abortion. The attempt to overturn *Roe* is a barren pursuit. Seven out of 10 Ameri-

cans believe *Roe* should remain the law of the land. Courts have struck down or enjoined many recent state laws, such as Arizona, Idaho and Georgia's second-trimester-abortion bans. This year's most extreme law—North Dakota's ban on abortions after six weeks of pregnancy—will almost surely meet the same fate.

Not satisfied with symbolic wins, one faction of the anti-abortion right is striking pay dirt with a more devious approach: End abortion state by state by driving abortion providers out of business. A bevy of bills imposing a financial burden on women or capricious rules on doctors, nurses and clinics has been

moved in states controlled by the Republican Party, America's tireless champion of small government. Nineteen states passed laws that prohibit abortion coverage in the state health insurance exchanges established by the Affordable Care Act. Eight states also banned abortion coverage in private insurance plans. Twelve states have outlawed non-

surgical abortion by telemedicine. Others imposed arbitrary new building codes on abortion clinics, regulations that have already forced some women's health clinics to close. Two days after a deadly tornado cut through Oklahoma, the state senate voted to defund Planned Parenthood.

There's more, however, to the Republican quest to regulate lady parts than the God, Jesus and unborn-baby rhetoric would have you believe. Republicans are still coming for your birth control. What better way to reduce abortion than to encourage couples who don't want children to use birth control? In several states, that's exactly what Democrats are doing,

expanding access to affordable birth control and science-based sex education. In contrast, six GOP-dominated states give pharmacists the right to refuse to fill prescriptions for contraception or Plan B. Eight Republican-controlled state legislatures moved bills that allow employers to exclude birth control from employees' health care plans. Republicans in the U.S. House even tried to make funding the federal government contingent on the repeal of the Affordable Care Act's birth-control mandate. Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell and 10 GOP Congress members filed an amicus brief in an employer's lawsuit to strike down this mandate. Surprisingly, it is President Obama's signature achievement—health care reform—that has handed the GOP fresh opportunities to interfere in your private business.

It's not as if Republicans have changed their spots since 2012. In June, the House passed an unconstitutional pre-viability abortion ban. But politicians with national aspirations have learned how to supply the right-wing base with its fix without drawing unwanted media attention. Thus 2016 hopeful Marco Rubio wins bipartisan plaudits for championing immigration reform, while few journalists report that he proposed a budget amendment making it a federal crime to help a minor cross state lines for the purpose of obtaining an abortion without parental consent. Senator Rand Paul, the self-styled libertarian Republican, tells

The religious right is banking on elections to give them one last chance.



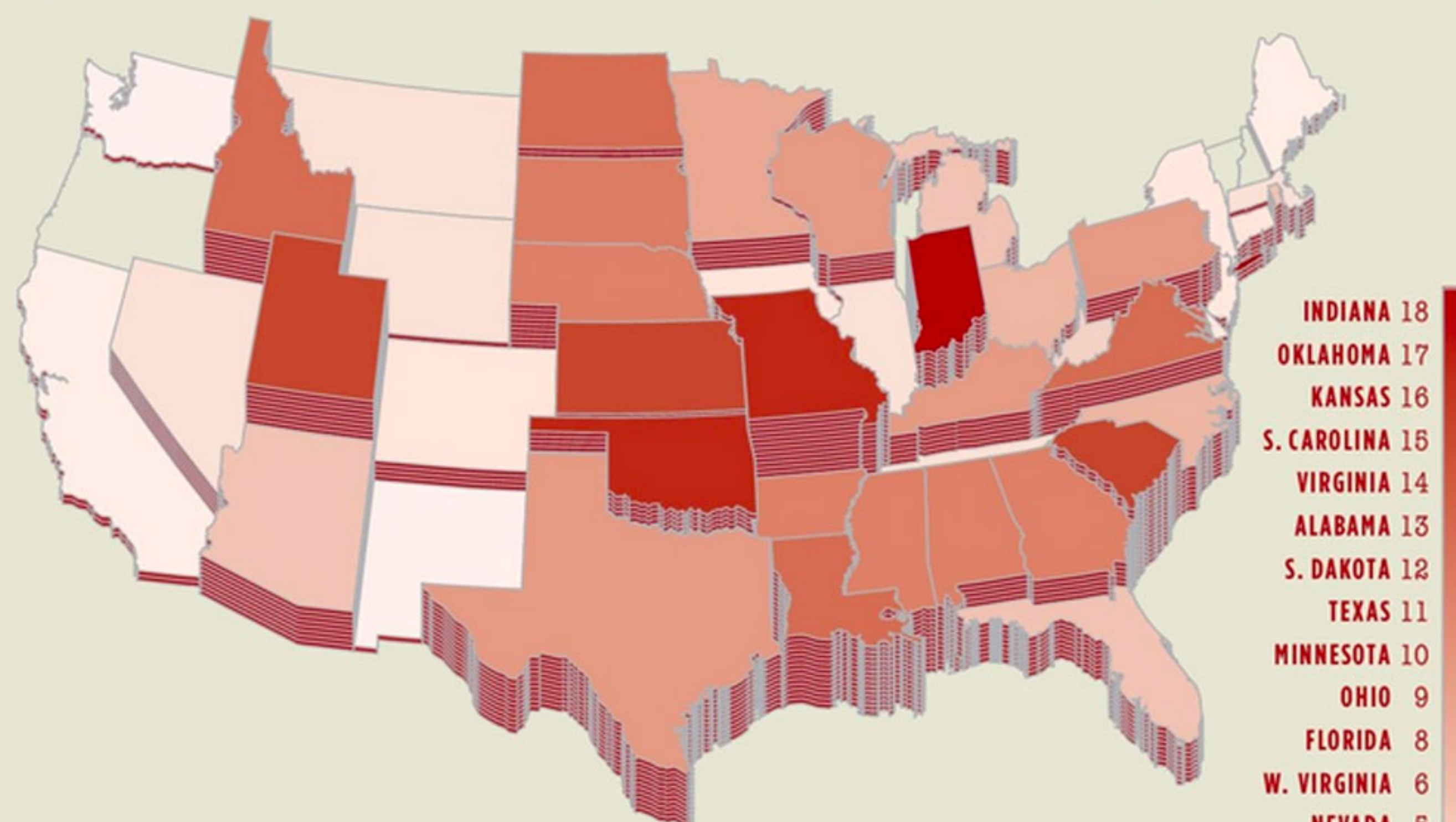
LIBERTARIAN SENATOR RAND PAUL SAYS AMERICA IS IN NEED OF A "SPIRITUAL CLEANSING."

evangelicals he believes marijuana should remain illegal, states should have the right to ban gay marriage and America needs a "spiritual cleansing."

For the moment, the firewall against the delirium holds. Thanks to changing demographics, a more tolerant and progressive electorate is poised to become the absolute majority of voters as early as 2016. Nevertheless, those zombies of American politics, the sexual fundamentalists of the religious right, are banking on state and congressional elections in 2013 and 2014 to give them one last chance at prosecuting their unpopular war on sex.

Nancy L. Cohen is author of *Delirium: The Politics of Sex in America*.

RED STATE RESTRICTIONS



Forty years after *Roe v. Wade*, reproductive rights are still being challenged. Many states have enacted abortion restrictions as part of an unconstitutional agenda. At right are the number of limitations passed by various state legislatures.

Sources: Guttmacher Institute and the Center for Reproductive Rights, 2011