



## Want La. Abortions to Decline? Provide Better Health Care

**Annie Glover**, University of Alabama at Birmingham

**Mark J. VanLandingham**, Tulane University of Louisiana

One issue that conservatives, liberals, and moderates all agree on is that fewer abortions is a good thing. And so observers across the political spectrum will be cheered by the recent news that abortions are trending downward in Louisiana over the past four years.

What is driving this change? On this, opinions diverge. Many “pro-life” proponents will focus on the very strict abortion laws already in existence in our state and will advocate for more. Nearly everyone supports adoption, but is it making any difference in abortion trends? And what about the recent expansion of Medicaid in Louisiana?

The answers to these questions require some context. Over the most recent decade for which data are available (2006-2015), the national abortion rate has declined, and by a lot: 26 percent. When this same most recent 10-year period is examined for our state, some surprising — and instructive — trends become apparent. In spite of the welcome declines in abortion in Louisiana over the past few years, over this entire 10-year period the abortion rate in our state has unfortunately increased, by a whopping 38 percent. What was happening during the first half of this period that was driving abortions way up in Louisiana, and what was happening during the second half that was driving abortions back down? And why aren't we sharing in the sustained and steep decline in abortions that the rest of the country has been experiencing for quite some time?