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Courts Put the Brakes on Agenda of G.O.P.

By **A. G. SULZBERGER**

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Ever since the elections last fall, the few surviving Democrats in Kansas hardly qualify as speed bumps for conservative legislation. The new governor, Sam Brownback, is a Republican and, even if he were not, the ranks of his party have swelled to a 124-to-41 supermajority in the Legislature.

As a result, a series of anti-abortion bills, including those that had been stymied or watered down in previous sessions, were turned into law at race-car pace. Then they hit the courts.

In recent weeks, two federal judges in Kansas imposed injunctions preventing two of those new laws from taking effect, pending the outcome of suits against them. The rulings were neither unusual nor unexpected, given that the battle over abortion rights has been mediated in courts for decades.

But in a year in which expanded Republican majorities in many states have been able to operate without the usual obstacles presented by divided government — threat of veto from a governor, split chambers or even minority opposition large enough to force compromise — these court challenges amount to the first real efforts to slow the crush of conservative legislation.

Federal judges have issued injunctions temporarily blocking all or parts of laws on contentious issues including abortion restrictions (South Dakota and Texas), financing for Planned Parenthood (Indiana and North Carolina) and [immigration](#) enforcement (Alabama and Georgia).

“As a supermajority, they didn’t have to listen to us,” said State Representative Marcel Black, a six-term Democrat in Alabama, where Republicans took control of the Legislature for the first time in more than a century and now have a supermajority. “But now they’re having to listen to the courts.”