

Kansas Senate approves proposed ban on abortion procedure

20 February 2015, by John Hanna



Kansas state Sen. Garrett Love, center, a Montezuma Republican, follows voting on a bill he supports to ban a specific abortion procedure Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. To his left is Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, a Grinnell Republican, who supports the bill, and to his right is Sen. Vicki Schmidt, a Topeka Republican, who opposes it. The bill approved on a 31-9 vote is model legislation drafted by the National Right to Life Committee as part of its long-running efforts to restrict abortion incrementally. The group first unveiled the proposal in Kansas last month, but similar legislation is pending in other states, including Missouri and Oklahoma. (AP Photo/John Hanna)

A national group's push to outlaw an abortion procedure and redefine it as "dismemberment" advanced Friday in Kansas, with the state Senate's approval of what could become the nation's first ban of the practice.

The bill approved on a 31-9 vote is model legislation drafted by the National Right to Life Committee as part of its long-running efforts to restrict abortion incrementally. The group first unveiled the proposal in Kansas last month, but similar legislation is pending in other states, including Missouri and Oklahoma.

The measure bans what doctors call the dilation and evacuation procedure, which is commonly used nationwide in second trimester abortions and in about 8 percent of all abortions in Kansas. The bill legally redefines the procedure as "dismemberment abortion." The national group has designated the measure its top legislative priority.

"It is unimaginable how such a procedure could be utilized by a medical practitioner," said Senate Majority Leader Terry Bruce, a Nickerson Republican who voted for the bill, adding that failing to ban the procedure would "further coarsen society."

According to abortion rights advocates, the procedure is often the safest way to terminate a pregnancy in the second trimester, but the ban could outlaw some earlier abortions.

The bill goes next to the House where there's also a strong anti-abortion majority, although some members favor an outright ban on most abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected.



Kansas state Sens. Garrett Love, left, a Montezuma Republican, and Ralph Ostmeyer, right, a Grinnell Republican, confer as the Senate votes to pass a bill

banning a procedure commonly used in second trimester abortions, Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. Both are sponsors of the measure. (AP Photo/John Hanna)

Republican Gov. Sam Brownback, a strong abortion opponent, has pledged to sign the ban if it clears the GOP-dominated Legislature.

The national group saw an opening to ban the dilation and evacuation procedure after the U.S. Supreme Court in 2007 upheld a federal ban on a late-term procedure described by opponents as "partial birth abortion." Abortion rights advocates argue that lawmakers should not rule out a procedure if a doctor believes it's a woman's best medical option.

"If even one woman is denied access to a safe health care procedure by a qualified physician, that's one too many," said Julie Burkhart, CEO and founder of the Trust Women abortion rights group and the South Wind Women's Center, which performs abortions in Wichita.



Kansas state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, right, a Grinnell Republican, confers with Senate Majority Leader Terry Bruce, left, a Nickerson Republican, during the chamber's vote to pass a bill banning a specific abortion procedure, Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. Both support the bill, which outlaws a procedure commonly used in second trimester abortions. (AP Photo/John Hanna)

Abortion foes in the Senate described the procedure they're trying to ban as "barbaric" and "gruesome." Their bill bans the use clamps, forceps or similar instruments on a fetus so the tissue can be removed from the womb, making exceptions if the procedure is necessary to save a woman's life or prevent serious, irreversible harm to her physical health.

Kansas already bans most abortions at or after the 22nd week of pregnancy.



Kansas state Sen. Mary Pilcher-Cook, left, a Shawnee Republican, confers with Sen. Dennis Pyle, right, a Hiawatha Republican, before the chamber's vote on a bill banning a procedure Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. The bill approved on a 31-9 vote is model legislation drafted by the National Right to Life Committee as part of its long-running efforts to restrict abortion incrementally. The group first unveiled the proposal in Kansas last month, but similar legislation is pending in other states, including Missouri and Oklahoma. (AP Photo/John Hanna)

More information: Anti-abortion bill:

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