

Oklahoma approves ban on second-trimester abortion method

8 April 2015, by Sean Murphy

Oklahoma would ban a common second-trimester abortion procedure that critics describe as dismembering a fetus under a measure that lawmakers overwhelmingly approved Wednesday, a day after Kansas became the first state to prohibit the same procedure.

The Senate voted 37-4 for the bill, which now goes to Republican Gov. Mary Fallin. She has not said whether she will sign it, but she has previously signed other anti-abortion measures.

Under the bill, doctors cannot use forceps, clamps, scissors or similar instruments on a live fetus to remove it from the womb in pieces. Such instruments are used in dilation and evacuation procedures performed in the second trimester. Of the roughly 5,000 abortions performed in Oklahoma in 2013, about 5 percent were performed using this procedure, according to the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

"It's gruesome," said Sen. Josh Brecheen, who carried the bill in the Senate and graphically described the practice to his colleagues.

Critics of the bill, including Planned Parenthood, have accused its supporters of using inflammatory and non-medical terminology "to insert politics into personal medical decisions." Abortion rights supporters said the procedure is often the safest for women seeking to terminate pregnancies during the second trimester.

"While women should not have to justify their personal medical decisions, the reality is that nine in 10 abortions in the U.S. occur in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy," Angie Remington, a spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, said in a statement. "Abortion in the second trimester of pregnancy is less common, but in all cases, a woman and her doctor need every medical option available."

The bill would ban the procedure except when necessary to save a woman's life or prevent a serious health risk to the mother.

Kansas Republican Gov. Sam Brownback signed a similar measure into law in Kansas on Wednesday, and abortion rights groups in that state said they are considering a lawsuit. Abortion rights supporters say the law could be vulnerable to a lawsuit because it bans some abortions before a fetus can survive outside the womb.

Missouri and South Carolina also are considering a similar measure.

Oklahoma has been sued at least six times since 2010 over various restrictions on abortion and contraception, including two lawsuits that are pending that challenge bills approved by the GOP-controlled Legislature last year.

One lawsuit targets restrictions on abortion-inducing drugs, while a second challenges a requirement that abortion providers have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. Both laws have been put on hold by the state Supreme Court while the cases are being considered.

Oklahoma lawmakers earlier this week passed a [bill](#) that would make it the fourth state in the country to require women to wait at least 72 hours after receiving information about abortions before the [procedure](#) can be performed.

More information: House Bill 1721: bit.ly/1EYOmw

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