

Kansas House Passes Life-Starts- 'At Fertilization' Abortion Bill

Kansas is set to enact one of the most restrictive **abortion laws** in the nation which defines life as beginning "at fertilization" and imposes a host of new regulations.

The Kansas House of Representatives passed the bill 90-30 on Friday night, a few hours after the Senate backed it on a 28-10 vote. Strongly **anti-abortion** Republican Governor Sam Brownback is expected to sign it into law. Republicans hold strong majorities in both houses.

In addition to the provision specifying when life begins, the bill prevents employees of **abortion clinics** from providing sex education in schools, bans tax credits for abortion services and requires clinics to give details to women about fetal development and abortion health risks. It also bans abortions based solely on the gender of the fetus.

The Kansas bill comes on the heels of **anti-abortion** measures passing in states across the country, including one in Arkansas banning abortions in the 12th week of pregnancy and a law in North Dakota that sets the limit at six weeks.

The Kansas language stating that life begins "at fertilization" is modeled on a 1989 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, said Kathy Ostrowski, legislative director of Kansans for Life, anti-abortion group.

Ostrowski said the language protects the rights of the unborn in probate and other legal matters.

If the bill is signed into law, Kansas will become the eighth state declaring that life begins at fertilization, said

Elizabeth Nash, state issues manager of the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute, which researches abortion-related laws nationwide.

While it would not supplant Kansas law banning most abortions after the 22nd week of pregnancy, it does set the state up to more swiftly outlaw all abortions should the U.S. Supreme Court revisit its 1973 ruling making abortion legal, Nash said.

"It's a statement of intent and it's a pretty strong statement," Nash said. "Should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade* or should the court come to some different conclusion, the state legislature would be ready, willing and able to ban abortions."

States that already have such language are Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, North Dakota and Ohio, Nash said.

The Kansas bill prohibits use of public funds, tax preferences or tax credits for abortion services. It prevents state-provided public health-care services from being used in any manner to carry out abortions, according to a summary.

Taking away tax benefits would amount to 12 tax increases for abortion providers, women and their families, said Elise Higgins, Kansas coordinator for the National Organization for Women. Even abortions to save a mother's life would not be a deductible cost, she said.

Higgins also criticized the bill's requirement that women be told of possible connection between abortion and later risk of breast cancer. "It's an obvious intrusion into the doctor-patient relationship by making them get this inaccurate information," Higgins said.

Ostrowski said the bill merely requires that patients be referred to online and other material about abortion and

breast cancer. It does not steer them to misinformation, she said.

The bill bars school districts from letting abortion providers offer, sponsor or furnish course materials or instruction on human sexuality or on sexually transmitted diseases. Higgins said that creates an unfair stigma for employees of abortion providers.

Another portion of the new law would prevent women from deciding on an abortion solely because of the gender of the fetus. It is unclear how many women terminate pregnancies for that reason.

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