

Marathon Democrats Abortion Bill Speech Block Helps Texas

Texas state Democrats blocked a drive for new **abortion restrictions** on Wednesday after a marathon speech in the Capitol in Austin caused some Republican backers of the bill to cast votes after a midnight deadline.

Democrat Sen. Wendy Davis spoke for more than 10 hours in a bid to pull down the voting window on a measure that would place a ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Her filibuster attempt stalled about two hours short of the deadline over a complaint that she violated rules, and the Republican-controlled Senate then began voting on the bill to cries of protests from spectators.

Republicans said they met the deadline but Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, after meeting with lawmakers, said some of their votes came in after midnight (0500 GMT), the effective close for the 30-day special session.

Dewhurst also bemoaned the “unruly mob” at the capitol, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

The bill called for stricter standards for abortion clinics.

Republican backers said it would protect **women’s health** and that the ban on late-term abortions would protect the fetus, based on disputed research that suggests pain is felt by 20 weeks of development.

Opponents said it would force nearly all Texas abortion clinics to close or be rebuilt.

Gilberto Hinojosa, chairman of the Texas Democratic party,

said Davis displayed courage in her filibuster bid.

Davis, who began speaking at 11:15 a.m. local time, was prevented by procedural rules from deviating off-topic or taking a break by eating, leaning against her desk, sitting down or using the restroom.

Republicans tried to disrupt her by charging that she meandered off-topic and, at one point, received help adjusting a supportive back brace.

Davis whittled away chunks of time by reading testimony and messages from women and others decrying the legislation, reciting previously suggested changes to the bill and tapping into her own life history as a single mother at 19.

She said the bill would have choked off her own access to a local **Planned Parenthood** clinic.

"I was a poor, uninsured woman, whose only care was provided through that facility. It was my medical home," said Davis, now 50, several hours into her speech.

Dewhurst, who is Senate president, suspended the filibuster after roughly 10 hours, to cries of "let her speak" from supporters.

Democrats appealed the ruling, sparking a row over parliamentary rules.

After the session, Davis said on social media: "An incredible victory for Texas women and those who love them."

But Republican Gov. Rick Perry, a strong opponent of abortion, could still revive the proposal by calling the legislature into a new special session.

Nationwide Debate

The U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide in 1973, but conservative states have enacted laws in recent years that

seek to place restrictions on the procedure, especially on abortions performed late in pregnancy.

Twelve states have passed 20-week bans, including two states where the bans take effect later this year, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights. Courts have blocked the bans in three of the 12 states: Arizona, Georgia and Idaho.

Earlier this month, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill banning abortions 20 weeks after fertilization. The measure is extremely unlikely to become law because Democrats control the U.S. Senate and the White House.

The Texas proposal would allow exemptions for **abortions** to save a woman's life and in cases of severe fetal abnormalities.

"In Texas, we value all life, and we've worked to cultivate a culture that supports the birth of every child," Perry said.

The abortion debate simmers elsewhere in the United States.

North Dakota's only abortion clinic on Tuesday filed a federal challenge to a new state law, the most restrictive in the country, one that would ban procedures to end pregnancy once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, as early as six weeks.

A Philadelphia jury last month convicted abortion doctor **Kermit Gosnell** of murdering three babies during abortions at a clinic in a high-profile case that focused national attention on late term abortions.

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