

South Dakota Bill Makes Women Wait Longer for Abortions

The South Dakota Senate on Thursday passed a bill affecting **abortion** waiting times that could potentially make them the longest in the country.

The bill, passed by a 24-9 vote in the Republican-controlled Senate, would exclude weekends and holidays from the calculation of a 72-hour waiting period for an abortion.

The bill was passed by the state House last week. It will go to Governor Dennis Daugaard, a Republican, next week, his spokesman, Tony Venhuizen, said.

Venhuizen said he could not say if the governor would sign the bill. He said Daugaard has been supportive of the “concept” of the longer waiting period and had supported the 72-hour waiting period previously put into law.

If it becomes law, the bill could potentially extend a waiting period to six days if a woman requested an abortion just before a three-day weekend. Utah also has a 72-hour waiting period.

“This bill has absolutely nothing to do with helping women,” said Sarah Stoesz, chief executive of **Planned Parenthood** Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota. “Instead, this bill is about further delaying women from having an abortion and protecting the convenience and schedules of crisis pregnancy centers—a stunningly cynical use of the legislature and of taxpayer dollars.”

Venhuizen said the measure addresses a practical consideration. “The rationale behind the waiting period is that it would allow time for counseling, and counseling is available through business hours,” he said.

Planned Parenthood had challenged South Dakota's 72-hour waiting period, but withdrew the challenge late last year, removing a court hold on the implementation of the law. The 72-hour law will be enforced in the next several weeks, according to Planned Parenthood.

The South Dakota vote came on the same day that Arkansas joined seven other U.S. states on Thursday in banning most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy as the Republican-controlled state Senate voted to override a veto of the legislation by Democratic Governor Mike Beebe.

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