

Arkansas to Appeal Ruling on Abortion Restriction Law

Arkansas Attorney General Dustin McDaniel said on Friday he would appeal a federal judge's decision striking down a state law that bans most abortions starting at 12 weeks of pregnancy, one of the most stringent such statutes in the United States.

U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright ruled last month that the Arkansas law violated the U.S. Supreme Court decision that a woman has the right to an abortion until the fetus is viable outside the womb, which medical experts say is around the 23-to-24-week mark.

A number of states have recently enacted restrictive bans on abortion, including North Dakota, Arizona and Texas, setting off a round of court battles.

Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe, a Democrat, vetoed the law after it was passed by the Republican-controlled state legislature in March 2013, citing its conflict with Supreme Court doctrine, but his veto was overridden.

McDaniel, who had previously echoed Beebe's reservations about the bill, said in a statement he would appeal the ruling with the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in St. Louis.

As enacted, the Arkansas Human Heartbeat Protection Act would have banned most abortions at or after 12 weeks of pregnancy, if a fetal heartbeat could be detected by standard ultrasound.

Doctors who were found to violate the statute would have risked having their licenses revoked by the state medical board.

Exemptions would have been allowed in cases where the

pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, if the life of the mother was in danger, or in cases of a gross fetal abnormality that made the fetus' survival impossible.

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