

Georgia Governor Signs Heartbeat Abortion Ban Into Law

Georgia's Republican governor on Tuesday signed legislation outlawing abortion if a doctor can detect a fetal heartbeat, part of a concerted effort to restrict abortion rights in states across the country.

Governor Brian Kemp received the applause of supporters in a signing ceremony, becoming the fourth governor to sign such a law since mid-March.

"Our job is to do what is right, not what is easy," Kemp said, recognizing the strong opposition to the bill and the likelihood the law will be challenged in court.

Anti-abortion campaigners have intensified their efforts since Donald Trump was elected president and appointed two conservative justices to the U.S. Supreme Court, hopeful they can convince the right-leaning court to re-examine the landmark case, *Roe v. Wade*, that established a woman's right to an abortion in 1973.

Kentucky, Mississippi and Ohio have enacted heartbeat laws recently, and Iowa passed one last year. Courts have blocked the Iowa and Kentucky laws, and the others face legal challenges. The American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia has vowed to sue to stop this law.

Even so, anti-abortion advocates have seized the political and judicial opening in their favor, introducing measures in 15 states to ban abortion as early as six weeks into a pregnancy, according to [a site specializing in the issue](#).

That has raised concerns among abortion-rights advocates about

expanding “abortion deserts,” described as major cities that are at least 100 miles (160 km) from an abortion provider.

Between Georgia and Mississippi is Alabama, where the state’s House has passed a bill that would ban all abortions unless the mother’s life is threatened. The state’s Senate is likely to vote on it this week, raising the prospect of a extensive abortion desert in the Southeast.

Ushma Upadhyay, professor of reproductive health at the University of California, San Francisco, said she was concerned for low-income women who lack the means to travel.

“This is basic health that should be available to all women regardless of where they live, how much money they make or how many children they have,” Upadhyay said.

Abortion-rights supporters see the heartbeat bills as virtual bans because fetal heartbeats can be detected as early as six weeks, when women may not be aware they are pregnant.

Georgia’s Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act permits later abortions in medical emergencies. In cases of rape or incest, the woman would be required to file an official police report.

Georgia pastors are praising the law, though.

“Today is a day of rejoicing,” Jentezen Franklin of Free Chapel says. “A day to celebrate another victory in the fight for life. Governor Brian Kemp, we thank you and stand with you as you speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves. We pray that other states would follow suit, spurred on by the encouragement and momentum this new law brings.”

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