

Huge Hit to Roe v. Wade: Oklahoma State House Approves Bill to Make Abortion Illegal

The Oklahoma House gave final legislative approval on Tuesday to a bill that would make performing an abortion a felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

With little discussion and no debate, the Republican-controlled House voted 70-14 to send the bill to Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, who has previously said he'd sign any anti-abortion bill that comes to his desk.

The bill is one of several anti-abortion measures still alive in Oklahoma's Legislature this year, part of a trend of GOP-led states passing aggressive anti-abortion legislation as the conservative U.S. Supreme Court is considering ratcheting back abortion rights that have been in place for nearly 50 years.

The Oklahoma bill, which passed the Senate last year, makes an exception only for an abortion performed to save the life of the mother, said GOP state Rep. Jim Olsen, of Roland, who sponsored the bill. Under the bill, a person convicted of performing an abortion would face up to 10 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

"The penalties are for the doctor, not for the woman," Olsen said.

Similar anti-abortion bills approved by the Oklahoma Legislature and in other conservative states in recent years have been stopped by the courts as unconstitutional, but anti-abortion lawmakers have been buoyed by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to allow new Texas abortion restrictions to remain in place. The new Texas law, the most restrictive anti-abortion law in the U.S. in decades, leaves enforcement up to

private citizens, who are entitled to collect what critics call a “bounty” of \$10,000 if they bring a successful lawsuit against a provider or anyone who helps a patient obtain an abortion. Several states, including Oklahoma, are pursuing similar legislation this year.

The Oklahoma bill’s passage came on the same day as more than 100 people attended a “Bans Off Oklahoma” rally outside the Capitol in support of abortion rights.

“These legislators have continued their relentless attacks on our freedoms,” said Emily Wales, interim president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes. “These restrictions are not about improving the safety of the work that we do. They are about shaming and stigmatizing people who need and deserve abortion access.”

Wales said Planned Parenthood’s abortion clinic in Oklahoma has seen an 800% increase in the number of women from Texas after that state passed its new anti-abortion law last year.

The Texas law bans abortion once cardiac activity is detected, usually around six weeks of pregnancy, without exceptions in cases of rape or incest.

Also Tuesday, the Oklahoma House adopted a resolution to recognize lives lost due to abortion and urge citizens to fly flags at half-staff on Jan. 22, the day the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in its landmark 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. {eoa}

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