

Kansas Governor Signs Far- Reaching Anti-Abortion Bill

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback on Friday signed into law a far-reaching **anti-abortion bill** that creates new restrictions on the procedure and defines life as beginning “at fertilization.”

The bill, passed overwhelmingly by the Republican-controlled state House and Senate earlier this month, becomes one of the most restrictive laws in the country, according to abortion rights advocates.

The bill bars employees of abortion clinics from providing sex education in schools, blocks tax credits for abortion services and requires clinics to give details to women about fetal development and abortion health risks. It also bans abortions based solely on the gender of the fetus.

The Kansas bill follows passage of new anti-abortion measures in states across the country, including one in Arkansas banning abortions in the 12th week of pregnancy and a law in North Dakota that sets the limit at six weeks.

Brownback’s office downplayed the signing of the bill, mentioning it at the bottom of a news release on a highway bill he signed. The Republican governor offered no immediate comment, but supporters say the law will help women make more informed choices and extends some legal protections to the unborn.

An **abortion rights** advocate said in a statement Friday that the bill is “another line of attack in the war on women” across the country.

“This sweeping **anti-abortion** measure is part of a larger effort by politicians throughout the country to try to

eliminate access to abortion, one law at a time, one state at a time," said Jennifer Dalven, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project.

The Kansas language stating that life begins "at fertilization" is modeled on a 1989 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, said Kathy Ostrowski, legislative director of the Kansans for Life, anti-abortion group. Ostrowski said the language protects the rights of the unborn in probate and other legal matters and is not written to outlaw abortion at fertilization.

Kansas is among eight states declaring that life begins at fertilization, said Elizabeth Nash, state issues manager of the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute, which researches abortion-related laws nationwide. She said the law would help states more quickly ban abortions if the U.S. Supreme Court revisits its 1973 ruling making abortion legal.

States that already have such language are Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, North Dakota and Ohio, Nash said.