

Missouri Gov. Signs Nation's Eighth Heartbeat Bill Into Law

Missouri's Republican governor signed a bill banning most abortions in the Midwestern state after the eighth week of pregnancy, part of a wave of restrictions aimed at driving a challenge of abortion to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Listen to the podcasts in the article to hear why the fight against abortion is so important.

"By signing this bill today, we are sending a strong signal to the nation that, in Missouri, we stand for life, protect women's health, and advocate for the unborn," Parson said in a statement after signing the law. "All life has value and is worth protecting."

The state is one of eight where Republican-controlled legislatures this year have passed new restrictions on abortion. It is part of a coordinated campaign aimed at prompting the conservative-majority top court to cut back or overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that established a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.

The most restrictive of those bills was signed into law in Alabama last week.

It bans abortion at all times and in almost all cases, including when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, but allows exceptions when the mother's life is in danger. The Missouri bill also offers no exception for cases of rape or incest.

The American Civil Liberties Union has said it will sue to block Alabama's law from taking effect.

Last week, the ACLU joined Planned Parenthood, the women's reproductive healthcare provider, in suing Ohio over its recent six-week abortion ban. Mississippi will defend a new law banning abortion once a fetal heartbeat has been detected in a federal appeals court on Tuesday after the Center for Reproductive Rights sued to block it taking effect.

Abortion is one of the most bitterly contested social issues in the United States. Opponents often cite religious belief in saying that fetuses deserve rights similar to those of infants. Abortion rights advocates say the bans deprive women of equal rights and endanger those who end up seeking riskier, illegal methods to end a pregnancy.

Kentucky, Georgia, Utah, Mississippi and Arkansas have also passed new restrictions on abortion this year.

Conservative lawmakers have been emboldened in their efforts to roll back *Roe v. Wade* by two judicial appointments by President Donald Trump that have given conservatives a 5-4 majority on the Supreme Court.

The court on Monday took no action on appeals seeking to revive two abortion restrictions enacted in Indiana in 2016.

© 2019 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.