

# Ohio Senate Passes Abortion Ban

The Ohio Senate passed a bill on Wednesday that would ban abortions after 20 weeks of gestation, following the passage of a similar ban by the Wisconsin Senate this month.

The legislation, which passed 23-9, contains a narrow exception for medical emergencies, but not for rape or incest. It would now go to the House, which, like the Senate, is dominated by Republicans.

Fourteen states have laws banning 20-week abortions, according to NARAL, an abortion rights advocacy group.

The ban passed by the Wisconsin state Senate, which must go before the House there, makes an exception if the mother is suffering from a medical emergency.

Supporters of the Ohio bill cited evidence that fetuses can feel pain as early as seven and a half weeks.

"Not only do they feel pain but they feel it more intensely," said state Senator Jay Hottinger, a Republican.

The legislation challenges the fetal viability limit on abortions commonly triggered at 24 weeks by the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

State Senator Charleta Tavares, a Democrat, argued in voting against the bill that medical experts agree on pain-capability, stating that the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists oppose a 20-week ban on abortions.

The bill was backed by Ohio Right to Life, an anti-abortion group, which called the 20-week ban "the new pro-life 'litmus test' for Republican presidential contenders."

Both Ohio Governor John Kasich and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker are possible Republican presidential contenders.

Ohio Right to Life spokeswoman Katherine Franklin said she expects the House to take up the bill in the fall.

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.