

Oklahoma May Join Kansas in Banning 'Dismemberment Abortions'

The Oklahoma Senate on Wednesday passed a ban on the main procedure used for second trimester abortions, a day after neighboring Kansas became the first state to ban the practice that its critics call "dismemberment abortions."

The "Dismemberment Abortion Act" passed easily in both houses of the Republican-dominated Oklahoma legislature and should soon head to Governor Mary Fallin, a Republican, who has been a staunch supporter of abortion restrictions.

The procedure is set to be the newest political flashpoint in the U.S. debate over reproductive rights with groups opposed to abortions looking to introduce similar bans in other states.

"This law has the power to transform the landscape of abortion policy in the United States," Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, a prominent group opposed to abortions, said in a statement on Tuesday in regard to the Kansas ban.

The process often referred to as dilation and evacuation is regarded by healthcare experts as the safest way to conduct a second trimester abortion. The fetus is typically removed with forceps, sometimes in pieces.

Imposing bans will interfere with physicians as they try to give the best care to women by reducing access in second trimester abortions, said Elizabeth Nash, with the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports the right to abortion but whose research is cited by both sides in the debate.

“This is a huge overstep by politicians into the medical practice,” said Nash, a specialist in state legislation with the institute.

Nearly 90 percent of U.S. abortions take place in the first trimester. The procedure banned in Kansas was used in about 8 to 9 percent of abortions there.

Some women are forced to delay the procedure to raise funds for medical care or arrange a trip to a facility that provides abortions, which have become fewer in states where Republican-controlled governments have imposed restrictions that women’s rights groups said are aimed at eliminating clinics.

Kansas has been at the forefront in applying restrictions. Missouri and South Carolina are also looking to impose a similar ban on the second trimester procedure.

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