

# Texas House Nears Vote on Proposed Abortion Restrictions

Thousands of supporters and opponents of abortion rights converged on the Texas Capitol on Monday for hours of protests as the state House of Representatives prepares to debate the proposed abortion restrictions on Tuesday.

The state House could vote on the bill as early as Tuesday, two weeks after Democratic state Senator Wendy Davis filibustered for 11 hours to prevent passage of the legislation. Davis's tactic forced Republicans to start over in the state legislature their effort to pass a ban on most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy and toughen regulations for abortion clinics.

On Monday evening blue-clad supporters of the legislation – including former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and Michelle Duggar of the reality TV show “19 Kids and Counting” – crowded outside the statehouse chanting, “Pass the bill!” and praying.

“Our battle, ladies and gentlemen, is not between Republicans and Democrats,” Robert Jeffress, senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, told the crowd. “The battle is between light and darkness, between good and evil, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, and it is a battle we are going to win.”

As the anti-abortion demonstration wrapped up, abortion-rights advocates dressed in orange marched past the governor's mansion to the state Capitol chanting “Whose choice? Our choice!”

Meanwhile, the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services saw more than 3,800 people testify or register their position

on the bill, according to committee Chairwoman Jane Nelson.

The Senate panel was not expected to vote on the measure Monday evening.

The proposed ban on most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy—a version of which has passed in 12 states – is based on controversial medical research that suggests a fetus starts to feel pain at that point.

“Are we willing to take even a chance that a baby being aborted is suffering?” bill supporter Senator Bob Deuell, a Republican and a doctor, said at the hearing.

Planned Parenthood has said that the Texas measure could lead to the closure of all but six of the state’s 42 abortion facilities, but the author of the Texas House bill, Representative Jodie Laubenberg, has said that assertion is an exaggeration.

Amy Hagstrom Miller, president and CEO of Whole Woman’s Health, which operates abortion clinics, told senators that abortion facilities in Texas are already licensed, inspected and highly regulated.

The proposed requirements “would not improve care but rather reduce access for women in Texas and put more women at risk for later-term abortions or for illicit abortions outside the medical community,” she said during the hearing.

Last week, three states in addition to Texas took steps toward imposing new abortion restrictions.

Republican Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signed into law a measure requiring doctors performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital and requiring women seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound. A federal judge on Monday temporarily blocked a portion of that law.

Republican Ohio Governor John Kasich signed a budget that

included abortion restrictions, and the North Carolina Senate passed some limits on the procedure.

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