

Why Abortion Seekers May Pay Extra Fees in Michigan

The Michigan legislature on Wednesday approved a proposal that would make it the ninth state to prohibit insurance companies from offering abortions unless women pay a fee in addition to the premium.

The proposal, which was brought before the legislature as an initiative petition organized by Right to Life of Michigan, an anti-abortion group, was approved in the House and Senate, both of which have Republican majorities.

State senators voted 27-11 and representatives 62-47 to make the "Abortion Insurance Opt-Out Act" proposal law. Under Michigan's constitution, such voter initiatives become law 90 days after the current session ends, without the need for Gov. Rick Snyder's signature.

Snyder, a Republican who identifies himself as **pro-life**, had vetoed a similar measure lawmakers approved less than a year ago. Snyder said in a letter to constituents the bill went too far because it treated situations involving rape and incest as elective abortions, and interfered with the private insurance market.

"Abortion is not true **health care** and people who object will not have to contribute their own tax dollars or insurance premiums for elective abortions," Right to Life of Michigan President Barbara Listing said in a statement.

The Michigan petition is one of a series of state initiatives in recent years that attempt to limit **abortions**, including banning the procedure after 20 weeks and enacting new restrictions on abortion providers. Eight other states have similar abortion insurance laws, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion rights research group.

The Michigan initiative drew the ire of Democratic state lawmakers. Michigan Democrats argued that the initiative provided no exceptions for rape or incest and the legislature should have let the matter go before voters in November 2014.

“Legislative Republicans are once again catering to the whims of special interest groups, and the citizens suffer,” state Representative Vicki Barnett, a Democrat, said in a statement. “Now, Michigan women need to plan ahead for ‘rape insurance’ in case the absolute worst happens.”

Democratic state Senate leaders called for its immediate repeal.

The petitioners submitted about 316,000 signatures, well above the 258,088 needed to put the initiative before the legislature. The signatures submitted represented about 3 percent of Michigan’s population of 9.9 million.

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