

‘Partial-birth’ abortion ban headed for implementation_110303

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'Partial-birth' abortion ban headed for implementation

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WASHINGTON (ABP)-When President Bush gives his promised signature to a newly passed bill, it will be the first time in 30 years the federal government has restricted abortion rights for adults.

The Senate has given final approval to a bill banning certain late-term abortion procedures. The House already had passed a bill banning the procedure abortion-rights opponents term “partial-birth abortion.”

Even many politicians who generally support abortion rights oppose the procedure, which is particularly gruesome. It involves a doctor partially delivering a live fetus, then puncturing its skull and vacuuming out its brain tissue.

Abortion-rights supporters say the targeted procedure is extremely rare and the bill is vague enough to encompass other kinds of more common abortion procedures. They also fault it for failing to contain an exception to

preserve the health of the mother.

The Supreme Court overturned a similar law in 2000, saying it was too broad and failed to include the health exception. Supporters of the current bill say they have solved those problems by tightening the bill's language and including in it "congressional findings" that show the procedure never is needed to preserve a woman's health.

Congress passed similar bills twice in the late 1990s. Both were vetoed by President Bill Clinton.

But President Bush, an abortion-rights opponent, has promised to sign the bill. In a statement released by the White House shortly after the Senate's vote, Bush said: "I applaud the Senate for joining the House in passing the ban on partial-birth abortion. This is very important legislation that will end an abhorrent practice and continue to build a culture of life in America. I look forward to signing it into law."

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., saw the bill's passage differently.

"This is a very sad day for the women of America, a very sad day for the families of America, because what is about to happen here is this Senate is about to pass a piece of legislation that for the first time in history bans a medical procedure without making any exception for the health of a woman," she said during floor debate on the bill.

Boxer said those on her side of the issue were willing to ban all late-term abortion procedures as long as a health exception was included. Abortion opponents often contend that bans with exceptions for the health of the mother can be abused.

Abortion-rights supporters saw the bill as an attempt to create a legal apparatus for overturning *Roe vs. Wade*, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court case that legalized abortion in all 50 states.

The Christian Coalition, in a news release under the headline “One Giant Step Toward Overturning Roe V. Wade,” also celebrated the decision. The group's president, Roberta Combs, said, “This is a very historic vote for America, and it is just a matter of time before the infamous Supreme Court decision” is overturned.

However, at least three separate groups have announced plans to take legal action against the law as soon as it takes effect. The Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the Center for Reproductive Rights and the National Abortion Federation all have said they intend to file lawsuits against the ban.

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