

# Bill banning abortion in Utah after 18 weeks advances in the legislature

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SALT LAKE CITY -- A bill to ban abortions after 18 weeks of pregnancy is advancing in the Utah State Legislature, despite threats of litigation.

[House Bill 136](#), sponsored by Rep. Cheryl Acton, R-West Jordan, passed out of the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday on a 7-5 vote.

"The laws of each state should reflect the will of the people of each state," she told the committee.

Rep. Acton has already modified her bill. She originally proposed a ban on abortions at 15 weeks, then changed it to 18 weeks in an effort to thwart any lawsuits. On Wednesday, she told the committee she also added in an exemption for cases where a fetus has a brain abnormality. Current law also allows for abortions in cases of rape, incest or health and safety of the mother or child.

"It does allow abortion for those who are not morally opposed to it," she said.

But it does change existing Utah law, setting a time frame for when an abortion is permissible under Utah law instead of "viability" of a fetus. The bill faced pushback from the state's largest health care organization, Intermountain Healthcare.

"It is incredibly difficult to diagnose many important fetal anomalies prior to 18 weeks," Dr. Cara Heuser of Intermountain Healthcare testified.

The bill could also face litigation.

"HB136 directly contradicts longstanding precedent holding that a woman should be free from unwarranted government intrusion," said Marina Lowe of the ACLU of Utah.

Planned Parenthood of Utah issued a statement saying it would challenge the bill if it were to pass into law.

"Every person deserves the right to control their own bodies — and that includes the right to decide whether and when to become a parent. Politicians have no place in the private, medical decisions of Utah women. If our legislators care about the health of women and families, they should remove the barriers to care that they themselves have put in place, such as the 72 hour waiting period, instead of further reducing access to a safe and legal medical procedure," said CEO Karrie Galloway.

Anti-abortion activists, who packed the committee hearing, seemed to welcome a lawsuit as a vehicle to get the issue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"The science, the technology has changed so much since Roe v. Wade, it's time to revisit this. I think this bill is a very good way to do that," said Mary Taylor of Pro-Life Utah.

When it came to a vote, lawmakers were divided. Two Republicans joined Democrats in voting against the bill.

"If we pass this legislation we'll certainly be in litigation and there will be an expense to it," said Rep. Steve Waldrip, R-Eden, who voted against HB136.

Rep. Acton told FOX 13 she was prepared for litigation if the bill were to pass the legislature and be signed by the governor.

"Oh yes. I've been assured," she said. "The opposition says they will challenge."

The bill now goes to the House for a debate.