

Utah wants Planned Parenthood lawsuit halted while U.S. Supreme Court hears abortion case

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SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah Attorney General's Office has asked a federal judge to halt proceedings in a lawsuit over Utah's 18-week abortion ban pending a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Planned Parenthood is suing the state over a law the legislature passed earlier this year, banning elective abortions after 18 weeks. In a filing, attorneys for the state asked a judge to halt the lawsuit while the U.S. Supreme Court considers a case out of Louisiana.

"The Supreme Court's decision to grant Louisiana's petition calls into question the standing of abortion providers, including the Plaintiff in this case, to challenge abortion regulations on behalf of patients. Without standing, this Court lacks jurisdiction to decide this case because there would be no 'case' or 'controversy,'" assistant Utah Attorney General Lance Sorenson wrote.

Utah's controversial law has already been under an injunction, meaning it has not gone into effect while it's being litigated in court.

"There is no harm in waiting approximately nine months or less for a Supreme Court decision, especially because the law is preliminarily enjoined," Sorenson wrote.

Planned Parenthood and the ACLU of Utah are expected to respond to the request before U.S. District Court Judge Clark Waddoups makes a decision. It would halt the case for a significant amount of time while the nation's top court weighs the Louisiana case, which centers around hospital admitting privileges for physicians who perform abortions.

Utah's 18-week abortion ban passed the Utah State Legislature overwhelmingly and was signed into law by Governor Gary Herbert. Next year, the legislature is poised to consider a bill by Sen. Dan McCay, R-Riverton, that would ban all elective abortions in Utah.