

North Carolina OKs bill for 72-hour wait period for abortion

June 3 2015, by Jonathan Drew

North Carolina lawmakers passed a bill on Wednesday that would make the state one of several with 72-hour waiting periods for an abortion, sending the measure to the governor's desk.

The [bill](#)'s passage will test Republican Gov. Pat McCrory's statement during his 2012 campaign that he wouldn't sign any further restrictions on abortion if elected. The House and Senate chambers in the GOP-controlled legislature approved the measure by margins above the threshold for overcoming a veto, should the governor choose to do so.

Bill supporters have said that increasing the state's waiting period from the current 24 hours will give pregnant women more time to collect information about a difficult decision. The bill's House sponsors also said they hope the measure would lead to fewer abortions.

The bill requires women to talk to a doctor or other qualified professional 72 hours before having an abortion, unless there's a medical emergency.

Three other states have 72-hour waiting periods: Missouri, South Dakota and Utah. Oklahoma's waiting period of that length goes into effect in November.

The bill adds other rules for doctors and clinics that perform abortions and includes several unrelated criminal justice measures.

Democratic lawmakers and other opponents have said there is no medical reason for increasing the wait, and they've complained that Republicans want to add more hurdles for women seeking a procedure that courts have ruled to be constitutionally protected.

"In the majority's view, a woman's right to choose is an empty and hollow concept with little meaning," said Rep. Rick Glazier, a Cumberland County Democrat.

Since Republicans took over North Carolina's legislature in 2011, the state has passed several laws aimed at limiting abortions, including the current 24-hour waiting period. Some credit the laws with contributing to the 26 percent decline in the number of abortions in North Carolina since 2010.

The bill that passed Wednesday also requires doctors to provide more data to state regulators about certain second-trimester abortions, and it makes clear that clinics and ambulatory surgical centers performing abortions must be inspected annually and that no one under 18 can work at them.

Other criminal justice measures expand the definition of statutory rape, make administrative changes to child support collection and specify places that must be avoided by sex offenders registered in other states who come to North Carolina.

The bill's passage was applauded by Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the NC Values Coalition. She called it "a major victory that will protect women and save the lives of unborn children in North Carolina." She urged the governor to sign it.

Asked about the bill last week, the governor told reporters he generally doesn't comment on legislation before it passes. His media office didn't

immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Opponents of the bill have urged McCrory to stand by his answer in a 2012 gubernatorial debate when he was asked what further abortion restrictions he would sign if elected. McCrory responded only: "None."

McCrory signed a law in 2013 that gave his administration authority to regulate abortion clinics using standards like those for outpatient surgery centers "while not unduly restricting access," and he argued that he wasn't going back on his word by signing it.

Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina said they plan to deliver thousands of petitions on Thursday urging the governor to veto the bill. If the bill were vetoed, lawmakers could vote on whether to override it.

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