

## Arkansas panel OKs restrictions on 2nd trimester abortions

January 19 2017, by Kelly P. Kissel

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An Arkansas legislative committee voted Thursday to outlaw an abortion procedure that opponents call "savage" and "barbaric" while others deem it the safest way to end a pregnancy in the second trimester.

The proposal by a legislator who is also president of Arkansas Right to Life would ban dilation and evacuation, also known as a D&E abortion. The House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee passed the measure Thursday on a voice vote.

"We have not stopped a single abortion if we pass this bill," Rep. Andy Mayberry said, telling colleagues that other, less-violent means are available to women seeking an abortion more than 12 weeks into their pregnancy.

Arkansas would be the third state to ban dilation and evacuation abortions, after Mississippi and West Virginia. Similar prohibitions are on hold amid court challenges in other states.

Arkansas officials say 18 percent of the state's 3,771 abortions in 2015 were done through a D&E procedure.

Victoria Leigh, who testified against the bill on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, said the other means would be "incredibly invasive," cost more and require a hospital stay.

"That's why this bill rises to an undue burden," she said after the hearing.

Planned Parenthood says the legislation is among the "extreme and ideological attacks" on women.

Mayberry, a Republican from suburban Little Rock, wants to outlaw the use of levered clamps, forceps, tongs or scissors to purposely dismember a "living unborn child." He called the procedure "savage ... barbaric and ... cruel."

Dr. Richard Wyatt, a Little Rock obstetrician, told the panel that, during a D&E abortion, a doctor must reconstruct the fetus outside the womb "like a puzzle" to ensure all of it has been removed and reduce the risk of infection.

Leigh accused the proposal's supporters of using inflammatory language to describe the procedure rather than a scientific description.

"Those are not medical terms and not appropriate in discussing legislation," she said.

"We're discussing the dismembering of a child," Rep. Robin Lundstrom said. "It's not a walk in the park. This is what we're talking about."

Leigh and Mayberry each said 96 percent to 97 percent of second-trimester abortions are done through a dilation and evacuation. Mayberry's bill would allow D&E abortions amid a serious physical health risk to the mother—not psychological or emotional conditions.

Leigh told the legislators that a D&E abortion is the safest and most common second-trimester abortion procedure.

Under Mayberry's bill, women who might have a D&E abortion could later sue for damages for physical injuries or psychological damage, as could the father as long as he was married to the woman at the time of

the abortion. So, too, could the parents or legal guardian of a minor.

Separately Thursday, a set of legislators introduced a bill that would require that doctors provide care to an infant born in a failed abortion attempt. To refuse would be infanticide.

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