

South Carolina lawmakers consider near total abortion ban

August 16 2022, by JEFFREY COLLINS



Protesters who support more abortion restrictions and protestors who upset at the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling removing protections for abortions demonstrate in the lobby of the South Carolina Statehouse on June 28, 2022, in Columbia, S.C. Some South Carolina lawmakers who oppose abortion are being cautious when it comes to tightening the state's already restrictive laws even further. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June, paving the way for states to enact total bans if they choose to do so. Credit: AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins, File

A small group of South Carolina lawmakers have given their approval to a near total abortion ban that does not include exceptions for pregnancies' caused by rape or incest.

The 3-1 vote Tuesday—all Republicans for it and the lone Democrat against—sets up a showdown later in the day on whether to send the restrictive bill to the House floor.

South Carolina currently has a six-week ban passed in 2021 that went into effect after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June. Republican lawmakers plan a special sessions over the next month to consider even more restrictions.

The [bill](#) bans all abortions except when the life of the mother is in danger. It lists a number of different medical emergencies that would fit into the exceptions.

The legislation still has a long way to go before it could reach Republican Gov. Henry McMaster, who said he wants to see no abortions in the state.

Both opponents and supporters said the proposal could change considerably on its way through the General Assembly.

Some Republicans, especially in the South Carolina Senate, have said they aren't sure they want to go any farther than the [current law](#) that prohibits abortions after cardiac activity is detected in the fetus, typically around six weeks after conception. They said a vote in Kansas preventing lawmakers from seeking more restrictions and other developments have them reassessing whether a total ban is a good idea right now.

But the Republicans on House subcommittee Tuesday morning appeared to be ready to let that kind of discussion happen in the full House Judiciary Committee later in the day.

Democratic Rep. Spencer Wetmore went through the bill section by section, pointing out how the doctors and experts she has spoken with with think it puts women's health in danger.



Several South Carolina House members confer during a break in a meeting of a special House committee looking at a stricter abortion law in the state on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, in Columbia, South Carolina. Credit: AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins

Passing this bill will leave "doctors scared to practice; women scared to start families because they are worried this state will criminalize them if they have a miscarriage or worse leave them bleeding out in an [emergency room](#) while a hospital's attorney decides whether the doctors can help," Wetmore said.

She also said without exceptions for rape and incest, South Carolina is putting both the physical and [mental health](#) of disabled women or [young girls](#) who are raped at risk.

Republican Rep. John McCravy said the bill was carefully crafted to protect a mother's life while also making sure "all pre-born lives are protected and all innocent lives are protected no matter the circumstances of conception."

The Republican-backed bill also does nothing to bring more [prenatal care](#) for expecting mothers, Wetmore said, pointing out South Carolina is toward the bottom of the U.S. in the rate of mothers who die while pregnant or in childbirth.

"But we're too busy talking about controlling women's body to do anything that actually keeps our women and babies alive," Wetmore said.

Republican Rep. Sylleste Davis said she has been pregnant five times with three of them ending in miscarriages. She said she is aware of the issues some women have about the [bill](#), but her own experience has led her to think the state needs to ban abortion with only the life at risk exception.

"I believe that every life is important. Every life matters and I believe every life is deliberate," Davis said.

Outside the House's office building on Statehouse grounds about a dozen

demonstrators with Planned Parenthood South Atlantic gathered. They were outnumbered by [law enforcement](#), who set fencing and barricades expected to stay up most of the week.

The South Carolina Senate Medical Affairs Committee plans a public hearing on further abortion restrictions Wednesday.

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