



Tennessee Governor to Sign Sweeping Pro-life Bill into Law

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee has announced he will be signing sweeping pro-life legislation into law that bans all abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, typically around the sixth week of a pregnancy, with exceptions only to protect the life of the mother.

According to the *Southwest Times Record*, the bill “found new life through last-minute budget negotiations between the House and Senate” last week after the coronavirus pandemic had largely grounded most of Lee’s legislative agenda.



In addition to the heartbeat requirement, the bill also requires doctors to inform women who have initiated drug-induced abortions that the procedure can be abandoned and possibly reversed. Those who fail to post signs in the waiting room informing patients that chemical abortions can be reversed face fines of up to \$10,000.

Opponents of the measure claim there is no scientific evidence to support the idea that drug-induced abortions can be safely and successfully reversed. But according to [Tennessee Right to Life](#), the 2,500-member American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists supports providing the Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) protocol, and more than 800 medical professionals, including several in Tennessee, have been trained to administer it. The APR has reportedly saved more than 900 babies to date.

The bill also requires anyone seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound before the procedure, and bars physicians from performing abortions if they become aware that the abortion is “motivated by sex, race, or disability diagnosis of the unborn child.”

The legislation also bans abortions for minors in custody of the Department of Children’s Services and removes the current option to petition a judge for permission for the procedure, *The Hill* reports.

The bill passed in the Senate 23-5 on a party-line vote and now heads to the governor’s desk for signature.

“One of the most important things we can do to be pro-family is to protect the rights of the most vulnerable in our state, and there is none more vulnerable than the unborn,” Lee said, according to Fox 17 Nashville. “We have passed the strongest pro-life law in our state’s history and I am grateful to Lt. Gov McNally, Speaker Sexton, Leader Johnson, Leader Lamberth and members of our General Assembly for making the heartbeat bill law.”

Lee said the bill differs from last year’s heartbeat bill in that it was “enhanced” to have a “ladder” provision similar to that found in Missouri. The legislation is set up to automatically enact abortion bans in the event that the six-week ban is struck down. Immediately, the legislation enacts bans at eight, 10,



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12, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 weeks.

Predictably, the American Civil Liberties Union has already vowed to fight the new law.

“As promised, we will see them in court,” said Hedy Weinberg, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee in a statement following the bill’s passage.

Weinberg accused Republicans of “political maneuvering” by pushing the legislation into the state budget, but Adam Kleinheider, spokesman for Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally, contends the bill underwent extensive consideration and was merely sidelined because of the public-health crisis.

“The bill was a result of an exhaustive public Senate summer study and thoroughly vetted in committee this year,” Kleinheider said in a statement. “Due to conflicting House and Senate versions and the prospect of a difficult and time intensive debate, the Senate did not place it on a floor calendar during the first weeks of this limited budget-focused session.”

It’s unclear whether the bill will be upheld by the courts, as similar measures have been struck down in Mississippi and Ohio, as observed by *The Hill*.

However, Republicans in the legislature are expecting a legal battle and are hopeful the bill will take the pro-life fight to the U.S. Supreme Court, the *Southwest Times Record* reports.

In the meantime, pro-life groups are applauding the bill’s passage.

“Tennessee’s landmark new law includes some of the strongest protections in the nation for unborn children and their mothers,” said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List. “This law recognizes the humanity of the unborn child by stopping abortion as soon as a heartbeat can be detected, protecting them from lethal discrimination in the womb, and ending late-term abortions after five months, when unborn babies can feel excruciating pain.”

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