



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 6, 2022

Oklahoma House Votes to Make Abortion Providers Felons

Oklahoma state legislators voted to criminalize abortion Tuesday, approving a measure that would make performing the procedure a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison and/or a \$100,000 fine.

The Oklahoma House of Representatives [voted](#) 70-14 in favor of SB 612, which establishes a near-universal ban on abortions, “except to save the life of a pregnant woman in a medical emergency.” It had already passed the state’s Senate in March 2021, by a 38-9 vote. The bill is now headed to Governor Kevin Stitt, who has [pledged](#) to sign “every piece of pro-life legislation.”



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Oklahoma State Capitol

Per the [text of the bill](#),

SB 612 prohibits the performance of an abortion or attempt to perform an abortion except to save the life of a pregnant woman in a medical emergency. Any person convicted of performing or attempting to perform an abortion is guilty of a felony punishable by a fine not to exceed \$100,000.00 or a maximum sentence of imprisonment of 10 years, or both.

It underlines that the woman seeking to abort her pre-born child would not be punished. It would be medical practitioners performing an abortion who would be held accountable to the law. The bill reads,

The provisions of this measure do not authorize the charging or conviction of a woman with any criminal offense in the death of her own unborn child.... The measure specifies that it is an affirmative defense to prosecution under this act if a physician provides medical treatment to a pregnant woman which results in the accidental or unintentional injury or death to the unborn child.

Rep. Jim Olsen (R-Roland), the author of the bill, said the legislation was enacted in anticipation of a pending Supreme Court decision in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* on a 15-week abortion ban in Mississippi that prohibits abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. If the nation’s highest court upholds the Mississippi law, it could overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that established a “right” to abortion and prohibited states from banning the procedure before fetal viability, or around 23 weeks.

“Obviously, I’m thrilled because we have the potential of seeing many lives of babies saved — part of that depends on future court rulings,” Olsen said.

Lawmakers passed Tuesday’s bill with little discussion and no debate, added Olsen.

As the House was in session, more than 100 people rallied outside the Capitol in support of



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abortion. One of the protest's organizers, Oklahoma Call for Reproductive Justice, issued a [statement](#) claiming that the bill is racist, sexist, and anti-trans, among other things.

"These restrictions are rooted in white supremacy, patriarchy, and bigotry. The harm from this legislation will fall the hardest on communities already facing the greatest challenges in our health care system including people of color, immigrants, trans and nonbinary people, rural people, and young people," said Priya Desai of the organization.

ACLU Oklahoma said that the bill outlawing nearly all abortions "poses an immediate threat to our community's health and reproductive freedom."

The representative of Trust Women, which operates a clinic that provides abortions in Oklahoma City, slammed the lawmakers for "disconnected and cruel representation" for passing the pro-life bill.

The Planned Parenthood representative stated that by voting on such legislation, the House is "proving they seek complete control over the bodies and lives of Oklahomans."

When Stitt signs the bill, it will take effect on August 26, when the state legislature adjourns, giving abortion advocates some time to put together legal challenges to the measure.

Planned Parenthood Great Plains, which operates two of the four abortion clinics in the state, signaled it is already planning a legal challenge.

"This ban is more in line with the traditional bans that have been blocked in the past," Emily Wales, interim president and chief executive of the pro-abortion organization, [told](#) *The New York Times*. "So we are fairly confident that, as long as Roe remains the law of the land, there is a path to blocking this."

Similar anti-abortion bills approved by the Oklahoma Legislature in recent years have been [stopped by the courts](#). At the same time, pro-life lawmakers have been buoyed by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to allow Texas abortion restrictions banning abortions after six weeks of pregnancy to [remain in place](#).

Also Tuesday, the Oklahoma House adopted a [resolution](#), also authored by Olsen, to recognize lives lost due to abortion. The lawmaker dubbed January 22, the day the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in its decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the Day of Tears, and urged Oklahoma citizens to lower their flags to half-staff to mourn the innocent lives lost to abortion.

As of January 18, 2022, [62,502,904](#) babies had been killed in abortions since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.

Earlier in March, the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed [HB 4327](#), a bill that, if passed by the Senate and signed into law by Governor Stitt, would become the strongest pro-life law in the United States, as [reported](#) by *The New American*. According to the report, "HB 4327 would ban any doctor in Oklahoma from performing (read: *committing*) an abortion for any reason except to save the mother's life. It also allows for accountability for anyone who assists in an abortion."



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