



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 26, 2016

South Carolina Governor Signs Bill Banning Abortions After 20 Weeks

On Wednesday, South Carolina's Republican Governor Nikki Haley signed legislation that bans abortions after 20 weeks, with exceptions when the mother's life is in jeopardy or if the doctor believes that the baby would not be able to survive outside of the womb. With this legislation, South Carolina became the 17th state to ban abortions after 20 weeks.



Doctors who violate South Carolina's legislation face fines of up to \$10,000 and risk three years of prison, Fox News reports. The bill impacts only hospitals since the state's three abortion clinics do not perform abortions after 15 weeks.

While there was little surprise that Governor Haley signed the bill given her strong pro-life record, LifeNews writes that the South Carolina bill even had strong bipartisan support in the Senate, with nine of the 18 Democrat senators approving the legislation.

Despite the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which purports to legalize abortions until viability, which was estimated to be anywhere from 24 to 28 weeks, the South Carolina law focuses instead on fetal pain, which is believed to begin at approximately 20 weeks.

The bill protects "pain-capable unborn children from savage late abortions that frequently tear the baby's body apart, limb by limb," South Carolina Citizens for Life Executive Director Holly Gatling explains.

Some contest the science of fetal pain, even as research dating back to the 1980s has established that fetal pain can be experienced earlier than 20 weeks.

Dr. Steven Zielinski, an internal medicine physician and one of the first researchers to provide the scientific basis for fetal pain, testified before the U.S. Congress that a fetus can feel pain as early as eight weeks.

Decades ago, Zielinski and his colleagues Dr. Vincent J. Collins and Thomas Marzen wrote:

Functioning neurological structures necessary for pain sensation are developed as early as 8 weeks, but certainly by 13 ½ weeks of gestation. Sensory nerves, including nociceptors, reach the skin of the fetus before the 9th week of gestation. The first detectable brain activity occurs in the thalamus between the 8th and 10th weeks.... By 13 ½ weeks, the entire sensory nervous system functions as a whole in all parts of the body.

In 2013, Dr. Maureen Condic, associate professor of neurobiology at the University of Utah, School of Medicine, also testified before Congress that unborn babies are capable of experiencing pain between eight and 10 weeks into the pregnancy.



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In a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice, Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand at the University of Tennessee confirmed what experts had been saying regarding fetal pain, “It is my opinion that the human fetus possesses the ability to experience pain from 20 weeks of gestation, if not earlier, and the pain perceived by a fetus is possibly more intense than that perceived by term newborns or older children,” he wrote.

Support for a bill that would prevent fetal pain should be a no-brainer, even for those who otherwise support abortion. “Basic compassion for human life demands that this legislation be enacted all over the country,” said National Right to Life Director of State Legislation Mary Spaulding Balch, J.D.

While those committed to protecting life view abortion at any stage as murder, many pro-life advocates recognize the difficulty in passing a measure that would end all abortions, and embrace bills such as South Carolina’s as an opportunity to save some lives and take the nation a step closer to the end goal.

The bill’s sponsor, state Representative Wendy Nanney, articulated this sentiment to Reuters: “I believe that life begins at conception and every step we can take to get back to that point is important,” she said. “In my view and many others it’s inhumane to subject that baby to pain at 20 weeks.”

Susan B. Anthony List President Marjorie Dannenfelser called the legislation the “latest victory amid a flurry of state-level pro-life activity being led by women lawmakers.”

Dannenfelser has also pushed for Congress to enact a similar measure, noting that it would save at least some lives. “A national limit — which would save up to 18,000 lives a year and protect many women — is long overdue,” she said. “The U.S. is only one in seven nations to allow late-term abortion after the five-month mark. If we take back the White House and protect our pro-life majorities in Congress, we can pass this legislation in 2017.”

A similar measure had, in fact, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives last year, but pro-abortion Democrats in the Senate blocked consideration of the bill.



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