

# Iowa House passes measure to ban almost all abortions after 20 weeks

**By Joanne Fox**

*Catholic News Service*

SIOUX CITY, Iowa. - Pro-life supporters are praising the Iowa House of Representatives on passing legislation that bans almost all abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

By a vote of 55-41, the ban passed the House April 5. The legislation also enacted a 72-hour waiting period before an abortion could be performed.

The bill now goes to the GOP-controlled Senate, which earlier approved a similar - but not identical - 20-week ban. Once approved by the Iowa Senate, the bill would go to Republican Gov. Terry Branstad, who is expected to sign it.

If it becomes law, Iowa would join 17 other states in banning almost all abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. The Iowa bill allows an exemption for the life and health of the mother.

Specifically, the Iowa measure prohibits abortions at 20 weeks post-fertilization. Before an abortion can be performed, it also requires: a 72-hour wait period; an ultrasound; a description of the unborn child; an option for hearing the heartbeat; information on the abortion and options for adoption; information on the child's development; and risk factors related to an abortion. However, the requirements would not be applied to cases of medical emergency.

Republican Rep. Shannon Lundgren, who managed the bill on the House floor, called it an "honor" to be part of the legislation that saves the lives of unborn babies.

"This bill saves babies lives while protecting the life and health of the mother," she said. "I want to thank everyone for their messages of support, prayers and kind words while we passed the most historic piece of pro-life legislation in Iowa's history."

Jenifer Bowen, executive director of Iowa Right to Life, said the vote, after originally receiving bipartisan support in the Senate, was passed along party lines.

"Over the previous two days, debate raged on this bill in the House," she reported. "Republicans stood strong against immense pressure and, frankly, countless personal attacks and insults."

Tom Chapman, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state's Catholic bishops, pointed out one purpose of the bill is to update

Iowa state code to reflect advances made in saving the lives of infants.

“Unborn children at 20 weeks post-fertilization – once considered too young to survive – are now doing so at an increasing rate,” he said. “An abortion would no longer be performed at or beyond that point unless there is a serious threat to the long-term health or life of the mother.”

Chapman expressed concern that Iowa might become a destination for late-term abortion providers without this legislation.

“This session presents a rare opportunity to make changes to abortion law in Iowa,” he said, and the newly passed bill “will represent a meaningful gain for women and children.”

Bishop R. Walker Nickless of Sioux City called the legislation a “positive step” in the ongoing battle against abortion.

“This is certainly cause for joy in the defense of human life in the womb,” he said. “However, we must continue to pray that the scourge of abortion is ultimately lifted from our nation.”

The bishop cautioned that despite the victory, abortion – even in the early stages of a pregnancy – remains “the greatest moral evil of our day.”

“Without our pro-life witness and efforts, and most especially, our constant, devout prayers, we cannot expect to change the hearts of those who support abortion,” he said. “None of us can simply stand silently on this issue. We must continue to speak out in defense of the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

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