

Utah House passes bill banning abortion after 18 weeks

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SALT LAKE CITY — After a tense debate, the Utah House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a bill to ban abortion after 18 weeks.

The bill, if it becomes law, is sure to face a legal challenge.

“What will the lawmakers of Utah do to assert our right to protect and preserve human life?” asked Rep. Cheryl Acton, R-West Jordan, the sponsor of House Bill 136.

The bill prohibits abortion before viability, which is the standard upheld by the courts in other cases. Similar bills in other states have been struck down in court rulings. Rep. Acton was undeterred and suggested to her colleagues on the House floor that she was fine with the legal challenge.

A number of other lawmakers rose to defend her.

“We’re speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves,” said Rep. Keven Stratton, R-Orem.

Rep. Brady Brammer, R-Highland, said there was still time for a woman to choose.

“What is 18 weeks? You’re talking about 126 days. To put that in perspective, a typical NFL football season is 17 weeks. 16 regular season games and one bye. You have an entire NFL football season to make this decision,” he said.

But Democrats pushed back on the bill.

“When abortion access is restricted that women die. And the more that you restrict it, the more likely women are to seek these services on the black market,” said Rep. Jennifer Dailey-Provost, D-Salt Lake City.

After the 57-to-15 vote, Rep. Acton passed a motion to spread the intent language in the House journal. She said it would help for an inevitable legal challenge. Planned Parenthood of Utah and the ACLU of Utah have both threatened litigation.

The bill now goes to the Senate for debate.

