

Utah legislature passes bill banning abortion after 18 weeks

Bill now heads to governor's desk

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SALT LAKE CITY (ABC4 News) – A controversial bill to ban abortions after 18 weeks cleared the state legislature.

House Bill 136, Abortion Amendments, passed the Senate by a party-line vote of 23 to 6 Wednesday evening.

The bill, sponsored by Representative Cheryl Action (R- West Jordan), prohibits an abortion from being performed after the unborn child reaches 18 weeks in gestation.

Acton's original bill would have made abortions illegal after 15 weeks, but she eventually settled on the 18-week cut off in her amended bill.

"Eighteen weeks is where most experts can agree on the pain perception, so I went with 18 weeks," Acton explained in a previous interview with ABC4 News.

As the bill was discussed on the Senate floor Wednesday evening, Senator Deidre Henderson (R- Spanish Fork) said, "HB 136 sends a message that here in Utah, we value life."

The bill now heads to Governor Gary Herbert's Office for his signature or a possible veto. Planned Parenthood Action Council of Utah has already signaled its intent to sue if it's signed into law.

"If he signs it, we will be fighting this in court," the organization said in a statement.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) calls laws banning abortion prior to viability "a clear violation of a woman's constitutionally protected right to an abortion."

The organization says legal challenges to HB 136 have direct case law within our court circuit that establishes that pre-viability restrictions are unconstitutional.