

Utah abortion ban proposal gets early nod from lawmakers

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Photo/Rick Bowmer)

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah would ban most abortions if the U.S. legal landscape changes under a proposal that has gotten an early nod of approval at the Legislature.

A panel of lawmakers on Wednesday approved the plan to make performing an abortion a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. It has exceptions for cases of rape, incest or serious threat to the health of the mother.

The vote was 4-2, with four Republican men voting for the measure and two Democratic women voting against it. It now moves to the Senate floor.

“My opinion, my sense, my belief is the fetus has as much right to life as the mother would have for her choice,” said Republican Sen. Scott Sandall, according to the Salt Lake Tribune.

The legislation would come on top of a long list of restrictions Utah has already placed on abortion, said Marina Lowe, with the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah. This year, lawmakers also are considering requiring clinics to do an ultrasound before performing an abortion and to cremate or bury fetal remains.

The measure to ban most abortions contains a so-called trigger clause, which means it wouldn’t go into effect unless the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 case that legalized abortion. Several states have abortion bans that would kick in if the ruling is overturned.

If it goes into effect, Republican sponsor Sen. Dan McCay said women who wanted an abortion could still travel to other states like Colorado or Oregon.

Utah last year passed a ban on the procedure after 18 weeks of pregnancy, though it’s been blocked in court. It was one of several states emboldened by new conservatives on the Supreme Court to pass abortion restrictions.