Bill that would protect abortion through federal law fails in Senate

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Prompted by a case from Mississippi currently before the U.S. Supreme Court that could potentially ban abortion, an unprecedented effort by Democrats in the U.S. Congress to enshrine the procedure into federal law failed Feb. 28.

The Senate refused to consider the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA), voting 48-46 against invoking cloture which would have cut off debate and moved the bill to a vote.

All Republicans who were present, including Mississippi Senators Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, and a single Democrat, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, opposed the procedural move which required 60 votes to cut off debate so a vote on the bill could occur.

The U.S. House of Representatives, where Democrats enjoy a majority, had already approved the legislation by a 218-211 margin. Mississippi Congressmen Trent Kelly (R — First District), Michael Guest (R — Third District) and Steven Palazzo (R — Fourth District) voted "nay" on WHPA in the House. Bennie Thompson (D — Second District) voted in favor of the bill.

If the court strikes down its 1973 decision in *Roe V. Wade* legalizing abortion nationwide through all nine months of gestation, the decision on allowing abortion would devolve to the several states. The WHPA would have prohibited any federal or state regulation of abortion.

Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville on March 1 posted an array of resources on its

website explaining the Mississippi case and its potential effects. The resources, which can be accessed here, include a prayer guide.

The Mississippi law before the nation's highest court in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* would prohibit abortions after 15 weeks gestation. Thomas Dobbs is the State Health Officer at the Mississippi Department of Health. Jackson Women's Health Organization is the state's sole abortion clinic, located on North State Street in Jackson.

The court's ruling on the case is expected to be released soon.