

# Federal control of abortion passes U.S. House, heads to Senate

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) – The U.S. House of Representatives approved the pro-abortion Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 3755) Sept. 24 in a nearly party-line vote, 218-211. While all Republican members opposed the measure, every Democrat except Rep. Henry Cueller of Texas voted for it.

Mississippi representatives who voted against the bill were Republicans Trent Kelly (District 1), Michael Guest (District 3), and Steven Palazzo (District 4). Democrat Bennie Thompson (District 2) voted in favor of the bill. U.S. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, has announced his support for the measure.

The Women's Health Protection Act would go beyond the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion at any stage of pregnancy, by federalizing the contentious issue and prohibiting laws and regulations at any level of government that would limit or block abortions.

The legislation appears likely to hit a roadblock in the Senate, however. The 100-member chamber is divided equally by party and 60 votes would be needed to invoke cloture, which would eliminate a filibuster by opponents and bring the bill to the Senate floor for a majority vote.

An attempt to invoke cloture does not appear to have the support of all 50 Democratic senators, and no GOP member has expressed support for the abortion-rights proposal.

According to the pro-life National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) and other sources, the bill's language would annul laws in states that have such requirements as:

- Waiting periods and multiple trips before an abortion can be carried out. Mississippi has such laws.
- Information about her unborn child and alternatives to the procedure, for a mother considering abortion. Mississippi has such a law.
- Bans on sex-selection abortions, where a decision is made based on the preference of the parent(s) using tests that can determine the gender of a child before birth. Mississippi has such a law.
- Prohibitions on abortion after 20 weeks, based on evidence the child feels pain. The legality of a Mississippi law banning abortion after 15 weeks will be determined by the U.S. Supreme Court following a hearing before the justices on Dec. 1.
- "Trigger" bans, designed to prohibit abortion if *Roe V. Wade* is overturned at some point. Mississippi has such a law.

The sweeping legislation also would rescind most federal restrictions on abortion, as well as conscience protections for health-care workers and most, or possibly all, bans on government funding of the procedure, NRLC reported.

"This bill looks as if Planned Parenthood authored it, and it ought to shock and grieve our consciences," said Chelsea Sobolik, director of public policy for the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville. "This legislation is so extreme it eliminates all pro-life protections, removes any restrictions on abortion, and allows for a preborn life to be wiped out up to the moment of birth."

Abortion rights organizations applauded the House's approval. Alexis McGill Johnson, president of the country's No. 1 abortion provider, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, called the vote "an important step in protecting the right to access an abortion in the U.S, and halting the wave of harmful

and deeply unpopular abortion restrictions across the country.”