



Written by [Lisa Shaw](#) on May 8, 2018

Is Iowa “Fetal Heartbeat Law” the First Step to Overturning *Roe v. Wade*?

Iowa set a groundbreaking precedent on Friday as the “fetal heartbeat” bill was signed into law. Surrounded by cheers and a crowd of supporters that included mothers and children, Governor Kim Reynolds proudly attached her name to the historic and controversial Senate File 359. Described by many in the mainstream media as “the nation’s most restrictive abortion ban,” this new law requires an ultrasound for a woman seeking an abortion and then prohibits the abortion if the baby’s heartbeat is detected, which can be as early as six weeks. This bill was passed on the same day as a similar bill in South Carolina, banning nearly all abortions, was sent back to committee after a Democrat filibuster.



Lawmakers in Iowa, already one of the few states to ban abortions after 20 weeks, made this decision to take the protection of life even further. According to the *Des Moines Register*, “Republicans who debated the legislation late into the night said they hope their law will face a legal challenge so it can advance to the U.S. Supreme Court.”

As the bill was moving through the legislative process, Senator Jake Chapman, (R-Adel), declared, “This law, if signed, I believe could very well be the very bill that overturns *Roe v. Wade*” — the notorious 1973 Supreme Court decision that overruled states rights and legalized abortion nationwide.

The bill’s floor manager, Representative Shannon Lundgren, (R-Dubuque), went further to claim, “The science and technology have significantly advanced since 1973. It is time for the Supreme Court to weigh in on the issue of life. It has taken decades for the science to catch up to what many have believed all along: that she is a baby.”

Unapologetic for her pro-life position, Governor Reynolds stated, “I understand and I anticipate that this will likely be challenged in court, and that courts may even put on hold a law until it reaches the Supreme Court. However, this is bigger than just a law. This is about life. And I’m not going to back down from who I am or what I believe in.”

While initially SF 359 made allowances in cases of “medical emergency,” amendments were later made with these exceptions:

- the mother was raped and reports the rape to a law enforcement agency, a public or private health agency or a family physician within 45 days
- the mother was the victim of incest and reports the issue to a law enforcement agency, a public or private health agency or a family physician in 140 days



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- “not all the products of conception are expelled” following a spontaneous miscarriage
- a physician certifies that the fetus has an abnormality that, in the physician’s “reasonable medical judgment,” is incompatible with life

Representative Steven Holt, (R-Denison), supported the bill, but stated, “I do not agree with the exceptions in the amendment, for I believe that all unborn lives matter and that all unborn lives should be protected.” He went on to say, “However, I will vote to protect most of the unborn and we will continue to work to protect all unborn children.”

Also voicing their disagreement, but for reasons not favorable to life, were groups such as Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union. Suzanna de Baca, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, declared, “We will challenge this law with absolutely everything we have on behalf of our patients because Iowa will not go back.”

Declaring the bill to be “dangerous and unconstitutional,” Senate Minority Leader Janet Petersen, (D-Des Moines), who served on the subcommittee, said, “This bill doesn’t just go after women, it goes after doctors, it goes after girls, it goes after moms, it goes after grandmas, it goes after Iowa families. This bill will impact every Iowan who gets their period and every woman who doesn’t get their period. It is a direct attack on women’s health care across our state.”

However, Senator Jason Schultz, (R-Schleswig), who also served on the subcommittee, believes that culture has become repulsed by a “holocaust of death,” and referring to the legislation, said, “This may be what our culture is ready for.” He also stated, “Stopping a beating heart is never health care.”

Governor Reynolds, though closely surrounded by supporters, was aware of the resistance waiting just outside her doors. “I understand that not everyone will agree with this decision,” she said. “But if death is determined when a heart stops beating, then doesn’t a beating heart indicate life?”

Taking effect July 1, Iowa’s “fetal heartbeat” law will hopefully take its place as the first of many bills of its kind to lead our nation away from the “holocaust of death” to a culture of life.



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