



Louisiana's Democratic Governor to Sign Pro-life "Heartbeat Bill" into Law

Louisiana's Democratic governor, John Bel Edwards, will be signing the state's fetal heartbeat bill into law, marking a significant break from the Democratic Party on the subject of abortion.

The heartbeat bill is similar to others that have recently passed throughout the country. It ultimately bans abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, typically around six weeks. This bill does not include exceptions for cases of rape and incest.



"Even though I know there are horrible crimes that are committed with rape and incest.... The child should not be killed and terminated because of the crime of the father," said state Representative Valarie Hodges, who carried Senate Bill 184 in the House.

Governor Edwards has been a vocal supporter of pro-life legislation, ABC News reports. Following the state's passage of the heartbeat bill on Wednesday, Edwards released a statement defending his decision to sign the bill.

"As I prepare to sign this bill, I call on the overwhelming bipartisan majority of legislators who voted for it to join me in continuing to build a better Louisiana that cares for the least among us and provides more opportunity for everyone," Edwards said in a statement Wednesday.

Edwards reminded his constituents of his progressive record but reiterated that he ran as a pro-life candidate in 2015. Edwards defended his pro-life position by noting that his more liberal stances on Medicaid expansion, criminal justice reforms, and LGBTQ discrimination protections stem from his pro-life position.

The bill's sponsor, State Senator John Milkovich, a Shreveport Democrat, defended the bill against accusations that it is unconstitutional.

"God values human life, and so do the people of Louisiana," Milkovich said this month. "We believe this is an important step in dismantling the attack of the abortion cartel on our next generation."

The *New York Times* notes that it is extremely rare for Democrats to take such strong pro-life positions. The *Times* writes,

In the 1990s, the party agreed that abortion should be "safe, legal and rare," a slogan that has long since fallen from use. Today, Democrats rarely take public positions against any kind of abortion access and Republicans rarely take them in support. Louisiana has been an anomaly.

But as observed by Governor Edwards, Louisianans are "overwhelmingly pro-life."

"I am so proud of Louisiana and the Democrats there and John Bel Edwards," said Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America. "He's the only governor like this."



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 30, 2019

It is likely that the law will be challenged immediately, as has been the case in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio. It's unclear whether these laws will have a chance of surviving legal challenges, as Mississippi's heartbeat bill was temporarily blocked from going into effect on July 1 by a federal court last week.

"Here we go again," U.S. District Judge Carlton W. Reeves wrote in his opinion. "Mississippi has passed another law banning abortions prior to viability." Reeves claimed that the law "prevents a woman's free choice, which is central to personal dignity and autonomy."

As noted by the *Times*, Louisiana's heartbeat law is not enforceable until a federal appellate court rules on Mississippi's law.

States have been taking a stand against abortion laws recently, seemingly in response to New York's pro-abortion law passed in January that virtually allows abortions at any time during gestation, up to birth. In addition to the heartbeat laws passed in the aforementioned states, Alabama has passed a bill that criminalizes abortions, and Utah and Arkansas have both passed laws that would ban the most common form of second-trimester abortions.

Louisiana's legislature is also working on a constitutional amendment that will ask the state's voters to vote on whether the state should ban abortion outright in the event that the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*. According to *The Advocate*, Louisiana's House has sent the bill, sponsored by Democratic Representative Katrina Jackson, to a conference committee where the language will be finalized before an expected vote to place it on the October 12 ballots.

Pro-life champions are hopeful that *Roe v. Wade* may be overturned now that Justice Brett Kavanaugh has joined the Supreme Court. There seems to be a race to see which measure may make it to the Supreme Court and provide the opportunity to achieve lasting change against an institution that has claimed the lives of 61 million babies since *Roe v. Wade*.

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