

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster Signs Bill to Ban Abortions When Unborn Baby's Heartbeat Begins

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Today South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster (R) signed into law the South Carolina Fetal Heartbeat and Protection from Abortion Act that bans abortions once an unborn baby's heartbeat is detectable just weeks after conception.

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“If there is not a right to life then what right is there?” he said. “We have a duty to protect life.”

“There’s a lot of happy hearts beating across South Carolina right now,” he added.

With his signature, South Carolina becomes the 12th state to ban abortions when an unborn children’s heart starts beating — and it joins Georgia, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee, Ohio, Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, and North Dakota in doing so.

Yesterday the state House passed the pro-life measure in a 79-35 vote Wednesday following its approval in the state Senate in late January. The House put its final vote on the bill today and send it to Governor McMaster, who signed it into law during a ceremony this afternoon.

South Carolina lawmakers have been trying to pass a heartbeat bill for years and, after Republicans gained seats in the state legislature in November, many hoped 2021 will be the year.

One Democrat, state Rep. Russell Ott, joined Republicans in approving the bill Wednesday. Meanwhile, most other Democrat lawmakers walked out of the House floor in protest, according to the local news.

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South Carolina Citizens for Life leaders praised lawmakers for prioritizing unborn babies and mothers in the new legislative session.

“Since the beginning of the pro-life movement in 1973, the most popular pro-life motto has been, ‘Abortion stops a beating heart.’ It is a scientifically accurate statement, not a political soundbite,” the pro-life organization said in a statement in late January. “The Fetal Heartbeat Bill protects a pregnant woman’s right to know that her baby has a beating heart, and it protects the unborn members of our human family from death by abortion when the heartbeat can be detected.”

The bill also provides additional support for mothers in need. According to The Center Square, the legislation requires the state to fund prenatal and postnatal care for mothers who live in South Carolina and do not have insurance.

The pro-life bill prohibits abortions after an unborn baby’s heartbeat is detectable, typically about six weeks of pregnancy. Exceptions would be allowed in cases of rape, incest or risks to the mother’s life. Abortionists who violate the law could face a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for up to two years.

If enforced, the legislation has the potential to save thousands of babies’ lives each year. The state health department reported more than 2,500 abortions after six weeks in 2019.

However, the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood have already filed a lawsuit to immediately block the state from enforcing the law.

South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said Thursday before the signing that his office was already named in the Planned Parenthood lawsuit and he promised to defend the pro-life law against it.

“My office will vigorously defend this law in court because there is nothing more important than protecting life,” Wilson said in a statement.

A number of states have passed heartbeat laws in recent years, but most have been banned from enforcing them due to legal challenges by abortion activist groups. Other states with heartbeat laws include Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio and Tennessee. However, all of the states have been blocked from enforcing them by court orders.

One leading pro-life group thanked the governor for signing the bill.

“We applaud Governor McMaster’s pro-life leadership in signing this lifesaving legislation into law,” said SBA List President Marjorie Dannenfelser. “The beating hearts of unborn children should awaken the conscience of our nation to the tragedy and reality of abortion – which deprives innocent boys and girls of the fundamental right to life.”

She told LifeNews: “There is a growing momentum in the states to welcome and protect unborn lives under the law. Many of these state initiatives are on a collision course with our nation’s current abortion jurisprudence. Someday soon we hope the Supreme Court

will take the handcuffs off the states and allow them to pass pro-life laws – grounded in science and compassion – that reflect the will of their people.”

Polls suggest many Americans support strong limits on abortion. A 2019 Hill-HarrisX survey found that 55 percent of voters said they do not think laws banning abortions after six weeks – when an unborn baby’s heartbeat is detectable – are too restrictive. Gallup polls also consistently have found that a majority of Americans think all or most abortions should be illegal.

Some pro-lifers have renewed hope that the U.S. Supreme Court will uphold an abortion ban and overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Others, however, are hesitant because of concerns about losing the court battle and being forced to reimburse pro-abortion groups for their legal fees.

Though the high court currently has a conservative majority, Chief Justice John Roberts, who was nominated by a Republican president, has sided with the liberal justices on a number of occasions.

In 1973, the Supreme Court took away the states’ ability to protect unborn babies from abortion under *Roe v. Wade*, and instead forced states to legalize abortion on demand. *Roe* made the United States one of only seven countries in the world that allows elective abortions after 20 weeks.

