

Federal judge for second time blocks Kentucky abortion law



Interior of an empty courtroom with gavel and sounding block on the desk. (iStock)

For the second time in days, a federal judge issued an order temporarily blocking a new Kentucky law aimed at imposing more abortion restrictions. The latest order temporarily stopped a measure that would ban abortion if a woman wants to end her pregnancy because of race or gender as well as the diagnosis of a disability in the fetus.

U.S. District Judge David J. Hale granted the second temporary restraining order Wednesday. The order was sought by the American Civil Liberties Union in its legal feud with the state over abortion.

Republican Gov. Matt Bevin signed the bill Tuesday.

“The notion that *Roe v. Wade* protects race-based, gender-based, and disability-based abortions is disturbing. This is but the opening salvo of this legal battle,” said Bevin’s spokesman.

MISSISSIPPI GOV. BRYANT SIGNS 'HEARTBEAT BILL,' ENACTING ONE OF THE STRICTEST ABORTION LAWS IN NATION

According to the bill, doctors performing abortions would have to verify in writing that, to their knowledge, their patient did not want to end her pregnancy because of concern over her unborn child's sex, race, color, national origin or disability.

The pregnant women would not face penalties but doctors violating the measure would face felony prosecution and the loss of their medical license. Any clinic where a violation occurred would lose its license as well.

The federal judge temporarily blocked another new Kentucky law last week that would ban abortions in the state after a fetal heartbeat is detected which can happen as early as 6 weeks into pregnancy.

The measure, which was poised to become one of the strictest anti-abortion laws in the country, was signed into law Friday by Bevin and was set to take effect immediately.

A few hours later, Hale halted enforcement for at least two weeks to "prevent irreparable harm" until he could hold a hearing, according to the New York Times.

Attorneys with The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on behalf of EMW Women's Surgical Center, the only remaining abortion clinic in Kentucky. The lawsuit was filed in an attempt to block both measures passed by Kentucky's Republican-dominated legislature.

Kentucky is just the latest in a growing list of Republican-led states considering similar actions, known as heartbeat bills.

OHIO 'HEARTBEAT' ABORTION BAN PASSES SENATE AS GOVERNOR VOWS TO SIGN IT

On Thursday, Mississippi Republican Gov. Phil Bryant signed the "heartbeat" abortion bill, outlawing most procedures once a fetal heartbeat can be detected.

The Center for Reproductive Rights called the bill "blatantly unconstitutional," and has threatened to sue the state to block the law from going into effect on July

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The Ohio legislature proposed a similar measure during former Gov. John Kasich's term. Kasich vetoed the proposal, but the new Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, has indicated he will support the bill. The measure passed the Ohio Senate last week.

Meanwhile, states like New York, Virginia, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Washington have either passed new laws expanding abortion access, or are moving toward stripping old laws from the books that limit abortions.

The Associated Press Contributed to this report.

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