Kentucky Senate passes bill banning abortion when baby's heartbeat first detected

An ultrasound image of surrogate mother Manjula, 30, is seen on a monitor at the Akanksha IVF centre in Anand town, about 70 km (44 miles) south of the western Indian city of Ahmedabad August 24, 2013. | REUTERS/Mansi Thapliyal

A bill that would ban abortion in Kentucky once a baby's heartbeat is detected was passed by state senators Thursday.

Kentucky's fetal heartbeat bill comes in the wake of similar measures passed by Mississippi lawmakers in both the House and Senate Wednesday that could ban abortion as early as six weeks, a time when a baby's heartbeat can first be detected.

The Kentucky Senate voted 31-6 to pass Senate Bill 9, which has the support of the state's evangelical Christian Gov. Matt Bevin as well as the GOP controlled House.

A Republican who supports the bill told The Associated Press that it has an emergency clause, which means it would take effect once it has been approved by the Senate, House and Bevin.

During his annual State of the Commonwealth address a week ago, Bevin urged the legislature to continue to pass anti-abortion legislation, insisting they would prevail.

"At the end of the day we will prevail because we stand on the side of right and we stand on the side of life," Bevin said.

Emotional testimony from pro-life and pro-abortion supporters was heard before the decision Thursday, according WAVE 3. Supporters of the bill argued that legislators had a moral duty to pass it while others saw it as an overreach of

government.

"SB 9 is intended to ban almost all abortion in the Commonwealth with no exemptions for rape, no exemptions for incest or fetal anomaly," Tamara Wieder, a Kentucky Planned Parenthood representative, noted in the report.

Abby Johnson, a supporter of the bill who used to operate a Planned Parenthood clinic in Texas, argued that "It is unjust to take the life of a human being."

Democratic Attorney General Andy Beshear argued — after hearing Bevin's speech a week ago — that he has already informed state legislators that the fetal heartbeat bill is unconstitutional and would likely cost the state hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to defend it.

"Every single elected official in this room, including the governor, took an oath to support the Constitution," Beshear told the AP. "The Constitution provides a choice that I believe is between a woman and her doctor for at least the first two trimesters of pregnancy, and I'm going to enforce that constitutional right."

The latest push for fetal heartbeat bills comes as high profile Democrats, such as New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo, have claimed that President Trump wants to roll back *Roe v. Wade*.

New York recently passed the Reproductive Health Act, which codifies protections for abortion and allows doctors and other health care workers to perform abortions up to birth for any reason in which a pregnancy is deemed to be a risk to a woman's mental or physical health. It also removed abortion from the state's criminal code.

"He wants to roll back *Roe v. Wade* which is a Supreme Court case that guarantees a woman's right to choose. Take us back to a time when women couldn't get an abortion legally," Cuomo said this week.

Abortion rights advocates have been bracing for the potential rollback of *Roe v. Wade* which some have said would trigger bans on abortion in as many as 22 states.

But Pro-Life Action League Executive Director Eric J. Scheidler has dismissed that claim as "fearmongering."

"At most, only a couple of states with extremely conservative legislatures might even attempt something like a total ban on abortion," Scheidler said in a previous interview with The Christian Post.

"[It's] far more likely that states would seek to further restrict abortion, in line with the view of most Americans, with measures like banning late-term abortion and holding abortion facilities to the highest health and safety standards," he added.