



South Carolina News

S.C. senate committee approves abortion-ultrasound bill

12:55 PM EDT on Wednesday, April 18, 2007

By SEANNA ADCOX / Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. -- Women seeking an abortion in South Carolina would be able, but not required to view an ultrasound under legislation approved by a Senate committee Wednesday.

The proposal softens a bill the House overwhelmingly passed last month, which required women review the images. That requirement would make South Carolina the only state in the nation with such a rule.

The Senate version puts South Carolina more in line with what other states have done. The full Senate will likely debate the bill in couple of weeks and if approved, would send it to the House, where some lawmakers have said they will fight for the requirement.

The leader of an anti-abortion group worries that the idea will fail if the two chambers can't come to an agreement.

"The people of South Carolina want something, and the Senate bill was vetted so carefully," said Oran Smith, president of the Palmetto Family Council, an affiliate of Focus on the Family. "I'm hoping and praying for a successful outcome."

Proponents think women would change their minds after seeing an ultrasound and choose to keep the child or offer it for adoption. Critics consider it a way to intimidate women who already have made an agonizing decision.

Sen. Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, said the amended version was an agreement between both sides and could survive a legal challenge.

"It's 100 percent permissive," said Peeler, chairman of the Senate Medical Affairs Committee, which approved the proposal.

The chief sponsor of the House bill, Rep. Greg Delleney, has said the Senate version is not acceptable. Senators, however, said they could not support the House version.

Christopher Hollis, a spokesman for Planned Parenthood Health Systems, said the Senate version is much better, though he dislikes a requirement that clinics give women a list of crisis pregnancy centers that offer free ultrasounds.

"They're not giving unbiased information. They're there to give an ethical view," Hollis said.

Under the Senate proposal, if a woman chooses to view the ultrasound, a doctor must give a medical description of what she's seeing. It also dropped the requirement that an ultrasound be performed for every abortion. Ultrasounds are done in most cases to verify how far along the pregnancy is, which is required by law.

The amended bill adds a health regulation requiring ultrasounds if the doctor thinks the fetus could be at 14 weeks.

South Carolina abortion clinics are allowed to perform procedures up to 18 weeks into a pregnancy.