

# Arkansas Senate passes bill to ban abortion after 18th week of pregnancy

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (CNS) – The Arkansas Senate March 11 passed a bill to ban abortion after the 18th week of pregnancy.

The measure, approved in a 28-6 vote, does include exceptions in medical emergencies to save the life of the mother and in cases of rape or incest.

The original Senate bill had only the exception for medical emergencies, but Republican Sen. Jason Rapert, a co-sponsor of the measure, offered an amendment on rape and incest March 7, and the Senate voted for it.

News reports said the measure did not receive much discussion on the floor before the vote, but Rapert told his fellow senators it “actually has been well discussed” in the days leading up to the full vote. “It’s pretty simple in that we already have existing law that prohibits abortion at 20 weeks. This moves that to 18 weeks,” he said.

If the House passes the amended bill, it will go to Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson’s desk. He has indicated through a spokesman that he will sign it.

After the Senate vote, Rapert said it was “a significant bill because it does push the envelope further in the protection of unborn children.”

A lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas told The Associated Press before the Senate vote that the organization stood ready to challenge it in court. Lawyer Bettina Brownstein said the bill was “ultimately about driving legal abortion from the state and making women once again ...

subject themselves to unsafe and dangerous efforts to end their pregnancy.”

In February, Hutchinson signed a measure passed by both houses that would ban abortion in Arkansas should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

Similar so-called “trigger” measures also have been passed in Louisiana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Mississippi and have been introduced in Kentucky and Tennessee.