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# Controversial ultrasound bill fuels debate at Capitol

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KVUE News

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February 24th, 2009

## KVUE's Elise Hu reports

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A bill requiring women seeking abortions to first hear a fetal heartbeat and get a sonogram is getting public support from the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general. The three spoke out in favor

of state Sen. Dan Patrick's legislation at a rally on the Capitol's south steps Tuesday morning.

"I'm really proud that we have made Texas a safer place for the unborn, but our work's not done," Perry said.

People like Judah Myers, whose mother decided to have her despite being raped, showed up on Tuesday to lobby state lawmakers in favor of anti-abortion measures.

"Women can be a hero, instead of just thinking, for convenience's sake, for nine months I'll get rid of a baby," said Myers.

Abortion rights supporters say the bill is misguided.

"Physicians do not want the legislature coming in and telling them how to practice medicine," said state Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin. "To have the legislature mandate it, really steps over the line."

Politics is playing a part, too. Republican leaders know anti-abortion activists show up at the polls, especially in party primaries.

"The person who knows foundational truths, that will always get my vote," said Myers.

As Governor Perry and US Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, prepare to face off in a GOP primary, Perry's touting his pro-life positions to draw contrast with Hutchison, who favors some abortion rights.

"I assume that he's positioning himself for his primary," said Howard.

Texas is one of 11 states with proposed legislation for pre-abortion ultrasounds. In Texas' proposed law, a doctor would be required to show the ultrasound image of the fetus to the woman. It is similar to a measure in Oklahoma, which is being challenged in court.

Oklahoma's law is the only one that requires the image to be presented to the woman, even if she refuses to look at it. It also requires the doctor to describe the picture.

Oklahoma's law was supposed to go into effect November 1, but a judge put it on hold after the Center for Reproductive Rights filed a lawsuit saying it intrudes on privacy, endangers health and assaults dignity.

Sixteen states already have laws related to abortion ultrasounds -- some requiring they be performed and others requiring a woman be told where she can get a free ultrasound.

Planned Parenthood has voiced opposition to Texas' proposed legislation, saying the bill is merely "an opportunity to shame or hurt a woman who has already made a personal and difficult decision."

A similar bill passed the Texas Senate in 2007, but it stalled in the House.

The bill would amend the current Texas [Women's Right to Know Act](#) which was passed in 2003. It requires a doctor who performs an abortion to inform a woman about medical benefits before, during and after birth, a father to help support a child, counseling from government and private agencies and printed information for the woman.

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*The Associated Press and Dallas Morning News contributed to this report*