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Officials push bill against abortions

By [David Saleh Rauf](#) - Express-News

Three of Texas' top elected officials offered strong public endorsements Tuesday at an anti-abortion rally for a proposal that would require an ultrasound for most women seeking an abortion.

Speaking to hundreds of anti-abortion advocates from across the state, Gov. Rick Perry, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and Attorney General Greg Abbott called for passage of legislation that requires abortion providers to perform an ultrasound before terminating a pregnancy and make the image available for the would-be mother to view.

Supporters of the bill — authored by state Rep. Frank Corte, R-San Antonio, and state Sen. Dan Patrick, R-Houston — say that by allowing a woman to look at her ultrasound “before there's no going back,” the state could avoid some abortions. State figures show there were nearly 78,000 abortions in Texas in 2007.

“Too often, we see abortions that don't need to happen,” Dewhurst said. “In my heart, I got to believe that everybody wants to see fewer abortions and they want to see more adoptions and that's bluntly why I think this bill makes sense.”

House Speaker Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, whose stance on social issues such as abortion was questioned by some Republicans in his run-up to replace Tom Craddick, briefly attended the rally but did not speak. He declined to comment on the ultrasound bill through his communications director, Angela Hale.

The rally on the Capitol's south steps marked the second time Perry has publicly endorsed the ultrasound proposal since last month. In his State of the State address last month, he urged lawmakers to pass the measure to add “another layer of protection for the most vulnerable Texans.”

A similar measure, also authored by Patrick, passed the Senate last session on a 22-8 vote. It later died in the House.

This session, abortion foes are making it their top legislative priority. But opponents say the bill is still flawed by mandates that will require a woman to listen to a heartbeat if one is audible and will force the doctor to describe features of the ultrasound, including fetus size.

“These are really things that might be very obtrusive and could be an opportunity to shame and humiliate the woman,” said Yvonne Gutierrez, vice president for community affairs for Planned Parenthood Trust of San Antonio. “It's simply not part of medical necessity.”

Lawmakers in 10 other states are considering pre-abortion ultrasound bills. At least a dozen other states have similar laws on the books.

In Oklahoma, lawmakers passed a measure requiring an ultrasound image be presented to the woman before an abortion, and the proposal is being challenged in court — a move Abbott predicts would happen in Texas if the bill is passed here.

“And when it is,” Abbott said, “I want you to know that you will have an attorney general who will aggressively defend the constitutionality of that bill.”

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