

Senate approves abortion bills along party lines

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 20, 2021

The Senate voted today along party lines to ban abortions if they're sought due to the sex, race or disability of the fetus and to cut off abortion providers from the state's Medical Assistance program.

The chamber also approved legislation requiring doctors to tell women who have begun the drug regimen for a chemical abortion that the procedure can be reversed, which critics say isn't supported by science.

Republicans have pushed a series of abortion bills this fall, including some that Dem Gov. Tony Evers vetoed last session.

Dem state Sen. Kelda Roys, the former executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin, accused her GOP colleagues of playing politics on the issue.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

"We're not making law here today," the Madison Dem said. "All we're trying to do is hype up the conservative base before an election and try to put the governor in a tough spot. But we know he's going to veto these because time and again Gov. Evers has proven himself to be a champion for women."

Republicans largely didn't speak on the bills ahead of the final votes.

The Senate approved:

*SB 503, 20-11. The bill would prohibit the Department of Health Services from certifying a provider under the Medical Assistance program if it provides abortion services or is affiliated with someone who does. The agency also would have to decertify by July 1 any providers that provide abortion services or are affiliated with

someone who does. The bill includes an exception for providers that perform abortions to save the life of the woman, if the pregnancy results from rape or incest, or is needed due to the woman's health.

A similar bill that has also been introduced this session included the same ban on certifying abortion providers for the MA program, but didn't include the exception.

*SB 591, 20-11. It would require women who receive abortion pills to be informed they may be able to continue their pregnancies after taking the first of two doses needed to complete the chemical procedure. The legislation would require women to be told after taking the first pill that time was a factor and they would need to contact a health professional quickly to attempt counteracting the effects of the first drug.

Sen. Chris Kapenga, R-Delafield, urged passage, saying "information is power."

"What we're doing here is making sure that a woman has the most information she can, the best information she can," Kapenga said.

Senate Minority Leader Janet Bewley, D-Town of Mason, read committee testimony from an emergency room physician that there was no evidence to support the contention a medical abortion can be reversed and attempts to do so could lead to life-threatening hemorrhaging for a woman. She also cited the position of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists that legislative mandates on unproven, ethical research are a danger to women's health.

*SB 593 20-11. It would allow for a party to seek damages if a doctor performed an abortion due to the fetus' race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, or because it had been diagnosed with a congenital disability or has a potential diagnosis of Down syndrome. Though it would ban abortions if the fetus has been diagnosed with Down syndrome or other congenital disability, it includes an exception for a "life-limiting fetal anomaly" that is incompatible with sustaining life after birth. Under the bill, those who could seek damages for a violation include: the woman on whom an abortion is performed; the father unless the pregnancy is the result of sexual assault or incest; and a parent or guardian if the woman is a minor at the time or dies as a result of the procedure.

*SB 592, 20-11. It would require expectant parents be given educational materials if they receive a positive test for a congenital condition.

All four bills now head to the Assembly, which would have to sign off before they could go to the gov.

Sen. Andre Jacque, R-DePere, was absent as he continues to recover from COVID-19. Sen. LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, also was absent today.