

20-WEEK BANS: THE FACTS



On October 3, 2017 the House of Representatives passed HR36, the “Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act”. HR36 is another iteration of a number of 20-week abortion bans introduced on a federal and state level. 20-week abortion bans further restrict access to reproductive care and remove the rights of women punishing them physically, as well as psychologically.

What the 20-Week Ban Does

20-Week Abortion Bans are laws that seek to criminalize the process of obtaining an abortion 20 weeks after conception. Most legal experts cite these bans, and attempts to pass these bans, as unconstitutional. Attempts to restrict abortion access undermine *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court case that established the right to safe and legal abortion up to 24 weeks of gestation. Despite the 20-week ban’s fundamental contradictions to the statute put in place through *Roe v. Wade*, state legislators have continued to introduce and pass them, further revoking access to abortive services for women across the country.

The most popular model banning abortion at 20-weeks is the “Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act”. The theory behind this piece of legislation--that a fetus can feel pain at 20-weeks--has been medically debunked by the Physicians for Reproductive Health, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Journal of the American Medical Association. Yet, versions of the 20-week ban have been passed in over 17 states including Alabama, Indiana, Georgia, and Kentucky.

Who the 20-Week Ban Hurts

Here are the facts: **20-week bans hurt already vulnerable women**. These bans have severe implications for women's health and their quality of care. Statistically, **99% of abortions happen before the 20-week period** and most women who seek abortions after this period do so because their health or the health of their fetus is severely compromised. In 2009, the **CDC reported** that only 1.3% of abortions were performed after 20-weeks. Furthermore, certain **fetal and genetic abnormalities** are only made apparent after the 20-week period. These include *anencephaly*, a lethal fetal condition characterized by the absence of a brain and cranium, leading to death before or shortly after birth, and *renal agenesis*, a condition where both kidneys fail to develop also leading to death before or shortly after birth. These are just two of the fatal conditions that can be found in a fetus after 20 weeks. 20-week bans leaves women and families with a small window of time to garner access and obtain abortion care, further prolonging an already traumatic experience.

20-week bans also hurt doctors and licensed physicians. Most iterations of the 20-week ban criminalize doctors who conduct abortions on patients after the designated gestation period. For example, the latest 20-week ban introduced in the House, punishes abortion providers with up to five years in prison for terminating a pregnancy.

Finally it is important to note that **20-week bans disproportionately affect low-income women.** A number of recent studies have shown that women who face other systemic barriers are more likely to delay health care, subsequently delaying the detection of a pregnancy. Moreover, the average cost for abortive services at public clinics are between \$500 and \$1500. 75% of women who seek abortive services at clinics and from health care providers such as Planned Parenthood are low-income women who cannot incur these costs or must take up a substantial amount of time to pay for them. In most cases, it is already too late.

What Can I Do To Stop 20-Week Bans?

Unfortunately, 20-week bans can be introduced on a federal and state level. This means that even if a ban is rejected in the US House or Senate, your representatives can still revoke your access to abortive services through their state legislature. But here are a few things that you can do in your state:

Make Sure You Know When a 20-Week Ban has Been Introduced.

There are a number of fantastic reproductive rights resources that keep track of the introduction of bills and laws that restrict access to reproductive services. For, example, [Rewire's Legislative Tracker](#) tells you when a law has been introduced and where it is in the legislative process.

Understand the Jargon.

Anti-choice politicians often mask 20-week ban under names such as the "Pain-Capable Unborn Child Act", the "Women's Health Defense Act", or "personhood" acts. It's important that you know the coded language used to restrict women's access to care.

Contact Your Representatives.

Never forget: your representative represents your needs and your safety. If your Senator or Congressperson has introduced a measure that threatens your autonomy, let them know (it doesn't hurt to remind them that you hold the power in the next election ;) To find out who your elected official is, click here: [CLICK HERE](#).

Organize With Fellow Activists!

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