

Okla. lawmakers pass bill to make abortion a felony

Governor has 5 days to act before it is law

John Bacon

USA TODAY

Oklahoma's Senate passed a law Thursday that would criminalize abortion, an extraordinary measure clashing sharply with long-standing rulings from the nation's highest court.

Physicians who perform an abortion could be charged with a felony and stripped of their medical licenses under the act, which goes to Republican Gov. Mary Fallin. The bill will become law in five days unless she vetoes it. Fallin said she had not decided what she will do.

Republican state Sen. Nathan Dahm, who proposed the law, said he wants it to become a driving force in bringing down *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion.

"Since I believe life begins at conception, it should be protected, and I believe it's a core function of state government to defend that life from the beginning of conception," Dahm told the Associated Press.

State Sen. Ervin Yen, a physician who voted against the bill, called it "insane" and said he's certain the bill would face a court challenge. "I'm Republican. I'm Catholic. I'm pro-life," Yen told USA TODAY. "But I think it is silly for us to pass bills in Oklahoma that can't go anywhere. It's a constitutional problem."

Jennifer Miller with the Center for Reproductive Rights called upon Fallin to veto the bill. "Since Gov. Fallin took office in 2011, she has signed 18 bills restricting access to reproductive health care services," Miller said. "Each of these laws has been blocked by courts."

NARAL Pro-Choice America sounded a similar theme. "Against a backdrop of a presidential nominee threatening to punish women for accessing abortion, Oklahoma's new bill criminalizing this vital reproductive service is reckless and dangerous," NARAL President Ilyse Hogue said.