

Oregon House rejects abortion notification measure

SALEM (AP) — A measure to require doctors to notify parents before performing abortions on their minor daughters was narrowly rejected in the Oregon House on Monday after opponents said teens would be forced to have unsafe abortions.

The measure, which was defeated by a 32-28 vote, would have required physicians to give parents or guardians 48 hours' notice before performing abortions on females under 18.

Supporters of SB1126 called it a reasonable step aimed at giving parents the right to know if their daughters are undergoing a risky medical procedure.

Lynda Harrington, executive director of Oregon Right to Life, said the House "caved in to the demands of the radical pro-abortion groups and denied parents the right to be involved in this critical decision."

But opponents said parental notice laws endanger the lives of teens who are in abusive homes and who are afraid to tell their parents they are pregnant.

"They felt this was too much of an invasion of families' personal lives and their most personal decisions," said Maura Roche, public affairs director for Planned Parenthood of Oregon. "We know from other states that

restrictions make abortions more dangerous, even deadly."

Republican leaders generally have said they want to avoid contentious social issues such as gay rights and abortion so they could concentrate on school finance and other issues.

However, Senate President Gordon Smith, R-Pendleton, pushed the parental notice bill, saying the Legislature ought to debate a measure to help parents be involved in their children's lives.

The measure passed the Senate on an 18-11 vote and drew a veto threat from Gov. John Kitzhaber.

During Monday's floor debate, a supporter, Rep. John Meek, said the measure is more about responsibility than abortion.

"This bill is intended to stop teen pregnancy by forcing children to make a decision between sexual activity and having to tell their parents when they get pregnant," the Hillsboro Republican said.

Rep. Lynn Snodgrass, R-Boring, said the measure would promote better family communication and reduce the overall number of abortions performed in Oregon.

"It's time to give parents one more tool to perhaps stop

their kids from becoming sexually active in the first place," Snodgrass said. "The door to secrecy is closed and the door to support is open."

But Rep. Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene, and other opponents said the measure would force some teens to obtain unsafe abortions instead of telling their parents they are pregnant.

"There is no evidence that parental notice will improve communications between teens and their parents. The government cannot mandate such communications," Piercy said. "There are a wide variety of teens who will be endangered by this bill."

A provision of the measure would have allowed teens from abusive or dysfunctional homes to avoid the notice requirement.

It also would have allowed a minor to be exempt from the notification requirement if she signed an affidavit stating at least one of her parents is mentally ill or drug addicted.

Other exemptions would have been allowed if the teen states she is likely to become the victim of abuse. In that case, the state Children's Services Division would be required to investigate the abuse allegations.

State's Congress members discuss idea of term limits

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruling striking down state-sponsored term limits should help promote a more serious review of the controversial idea in Congress, two Oregon Democrats said Monday.

Rep. Elizabeth Furse, D-Ore., introduced a bill on the first day of the 1995 session that would impose nationally the same term limits adopted in Oregon — three two-year terms for House members and two six-year terms for senators.

The Oregon measure approved by 70 percent of voters in 1992 also limits state representatives

to six years, and state senators and all other statewide elected officials to eight years.

Today's Supreme Court ruling has no effect on term limits for state political offices.

Furse suggested today that up until now the push for term limits in Congress had been a half-hearted one.

"Oregonians overwhelmingly support term limits. I hope this ruling prompts Congress to bring up this issue again, seriously this time," Furse said.

"We'll now see who truly supports term limits and who just campaigns on the issue," she

said.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., said the ruling may help him garner support for his own idea to limit terms of Supreme Court members, presidents and even members of the federal reserve board.

"I would hope it brings about a sober deliberation on the balance of powers and term limits," DeFazio said today.

His plan would limit House members to three terms, but make those terms four years each instead of the current two, "to cut down on the pressures and the frenetic pace of fund-raising."

Senators would be limited to two six-year terms and the president would be allowed one six-year term, "so you don't have a president who begins campaigning as soon as they are elected."

Some form of term limit should be placed on Supreme Court justices, perhaps seven years at a time, DeFazio said.

"Lifetime terms were made when people lived to be 35, but should not be when they live to be 90," he said today.

"The federal reserve board has more power over the economy than Congress and the president combined," he said.

DeFazio said support for term limits remained strong among populists, but that support was waning among Republicans and right-wing reformers now that the GOP controls Congress.

"Newt [Gingrich] set up the term-limit bill in the House to fail intentionally. They are not as interested as they once were," he said.

"I would hope we would look at this as an opportunity to fix and rebalance the powers of the government to make sure we maintain the kind of system the framers of the Constitution had in mind," DeFazio said.



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