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HOUSE, SENATE SWAP 'PARTIAL-BIRTH' ABORTION BAN

For the first time since 1996, Michigan would once again ban a late-term abortion procedure under bills passed out of both the House and Senate on Wednesday.

Governor John Engler declared Michigan was the first state to prohibit doctors from performing so-called "partial-birth" abortions 15 years ago, but the courts struck down the law he signed and the Legislature subsequently has faced an uphill battle putting a new ban in place, including two vetoes by Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Senate [Majority Floor Leader Arlan Meekhof](#) (R-West Olive), a bill sponsor, said the legislation is similar to a federal ban on the abortion procedure, which was upheld by the Supreme Court.

"My mother chose to place me for adoption instead of having an abortion," he said. "I've been grateful for that my entire life."



But [Sen. Rebekah Warren](#) (D-Ann Arbor) said the legislation doesn't get to the heart of why women choose to end an unwanted pregnancy. An amendment she offered requiring insurance coverage for contraceptives was rejected.

An attempt to provide exceptions for the procedure to be performed if a woman became pregnant due to rape or incest was also rejected mainly along party lines. Under the bill, physicians or individuals performing the procedure would be guilty of a felony of up to two years behind bars, a fine up to \$50,000, or both, beginning January 1, 2012.

While the life of the mother is an included exception to the ban, critics of the bill said it limited doctor's options for providing the safest care for the woman.

"It keeps doctors from using their medical judgment," said [Sen. Glenn Anderson](#) (D-Westland). "And it sends a message the state of Michigan, not doctors, know what's best to protect the health of a pregnant mother."

But anti-abortion advocates like Mr. Meekhof called the procedure "gruesome" and something even abortion rights supporters should want to ban.

The term partial-birth abortion refers to a fetus, at least 20 weeks old, being delivered vaginally until its head is outside of the mother, or if the fetus is breeched having its trunk past the navel outside of the mother, and then killing it. The technical term is dilation and extraction.

Opponents of the state ban said no partial-birth abortions have been performed in Michigan since the federal ban took effect. Ms. Warren said the issue was a "recycled attempt to appeal to a constituency."



[Sen. Arlan Meekhof](#) (R-West Olive) sponsored the partial-birth abortion ban, which [Sen.](#)

[Rebekah Warren](#) (D-Ann Arbor) opposed, saying the bill is confusing to doctors because it's not a medical term.

[SB 160](#) and [SB 161](#) passed on votes of 29-8 with [Sen. John Gleason](#) (D-Flushing), [Sen. Steve Bieda](#) (D-Warren) and Senate [Minority Floor Leader Tupac Hunter](#) (D-Detroit) joining majority Republicans in supporting the bills. [Sen. Coleman Young II](#) (D-Detroit) was excused from session.

After a series of impassioned floor speeches, the House passed [HB 4109](#) and [HB 4110](#) both by votes of 75-33.

Twelve House Democrats voted in favor of the bills: [Rep. Tim Bledsoe](#) (D-Grosse Pointe), [Rep. Charles Brunner](#) (D-Bay City), [Rep. Paul Clemente](#) (D-Lincoln Park), [Rep. Bob Constan](#) (D-Dearborn Heights), [Rep. George Darany](#) (D-Dearborn), [Rep. Brandon Dillon](#) (D-Grand Rapids), [Rep. Douglas Geiss](#) (D-Taylor), [Rep. Shanelle Jackson](#) (D-Detroit), [Rep. Marilyn Lane](#) (D-Fraser), [Rep. Richard LeBlanc](#) (D-Westland), [Rep. Lesia Liss](#) (D-Warren) and [Rep. Roy Schmidt](#) (D-Grand Rapids).

[Rep. Mark Meadows](#) (D-East Lansing) urged the men in the chamber to not vote on the bills and let the female members decide what is best.

"This is truly a women's issue," Mr. Meadows, who opposed the bills, said.

Critics said the bill was more about getting high marks on political scorecards by interest groups come endorsement time during campaigns.

The bill sponsor, [Rep. Kevin Daley](#) (R-Lum) said he took offense that his bill is a political issue.

He went on to describe the way in which the fetus is killed during the procedure a floor speech.

"That's the reason why I'm here today," he said.

[Rep. Lisa Brown](#) (D-West Bloomfield) said there were a number of reasons she opposed the bill. She said not all religions believe life begins at conception, and added that members of the Tea Party believe government should stay out of people's private lives.

She also quoted [Governor Rick Snyder](#) that jobs are job one when it comes to his political agenda.

"How does this legislation move Michigan forward and lead us to economic recovery?" Ms. Brown said.

"Why are we wasting our time on this when unemployment is higher now - over 11 percent - than we took the oath of office?"

The Michigan Catholic Conference and Right to Life of Michigan both released statements applauding the Legislature's work on the issue.

"With a 15-year struggle now behind us, and with legal and political obstacles having been removed, Michigan Catholic Conference looks forward to Governor Snyder signing the ban into law. It must not be overlooked that this legislation received broad support from both Democrats and Republicans. Their vote today in support of justice for the unborn deserves applause," Conference President and CEO Paul Long said.

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