

Senator cites Hardage letter in arguing for abortion restrictions

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AUSTIN—A senator from South Texas cited a letter from Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director David Hardage as lawmakers passed stronger restrictions on abortions across the state.



Texas State Sen. Eddie Lucio [Sen. Eddie Lucio](#), D-Brownsville, read aloud three paragraphs of a letter Hardage wrote to every Texas legislator reminding lawmakers about positions against abortion taken by the BGCT in annual sessions. The [Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission](#) staff delivered the letter early in the Texas legislature's discussion of bills that would outlaw abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The Senate passed the provision July 12 by a vote of 19-11, with Lucio as the sole Democrat to vote for the bill. Gov. Rick Perry signed the bill into law July 18.

Scripture teaches that life begins in the womb, Lucio said, adding "A human person is a person, no matter how small."

Lucio read this portion of Hardage's letter on the Senate floor:

“With the recent addition of abortion-related legislation to the call of the special session, I write today to remind you of the position of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and urge your careful consideration of bills intent on reducing abortion in Texas.

“Texas Baptists have had a consistent and clear position regarding the morality of abortion. Abortion is inconsistent with Christian practice and should be avoided. Scripture is clear that each person is created in God’s image, and abortion as birth control is not compatible with the call of the gospel to reverence life. Importantly, the biblical narratives teach us to reverence every life involved in a crisis pregnancy: the unborn, the mother, the father, the extended family, the whole of society.

“This understanding is to be taught first and foremost in our homes and churches, but there is also a place for a public witness and legislative action. Texas Baptists support legislative remedies which serve to limit abortion except in extreme circumstances.”

In addition to prohibiting abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, the bill also mandates clinics that perform more than 50 abortions a year meet standards established for outpatient surgical centers.

Doctors also will be required to perform a complete examination before administering abortion pills. Follow-up exams must be performed within 14 days. Doctors who perform abortions will be required to have permission to admit patients to a hospital within 30 miles of their offices.