

Supreme Court strikes down Texas abortion regulation

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By a 5-3 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that required abortion clinics to meet surgical center standards and any doctor performing an abortion at a clinic to have admitting privileges at a hospital not more than 30 miles away.

“We conclude that neither of these provisions offers medical benefits sufficient to justify the burdens upon access that each imposes,” Justice Stephen Breyer wrote in the court’s majority opinion.

In ruling on [Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt](#), the court said Texas HB2, passed in 2013, placed an undue burden on a woman’s right to terminate her pregnancy.

Gov. Greg Abbott criticized the court’s ruling, saying it “erodes states’ lawmaking authority to safeguard the health and safety of women and subjects more innocent life to being lost.”

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton struck a similar note, insisting state lawmakers passed the regulations governing abortion clinics to improve patient safety and raise the standard of care for women.

“It’s exceedingly unfortunate that the court has taken the ability to protect women’s health out of the hands of Texas citizens and their duly elected representatives,” Paxton said.

CLC chief voices disappointment

Gus Reyes, director of Texas Baptists’ Christian Life Commission, expressed disappointment with the court’s decision.

“The overturned legislation sought to ensure vulnerable women would receive the proper standard of care in these facilities,” Reyes said.

Two parts of HB2—the state’s ban on abortions after the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and the requirement that drug-induced abortions be performed according to FDA regulations—remain in effect, he noted.

“These were important parts of the legislation, and their constitutionality was not challenged,” he added.

“As we now move forward, we need to recognize that abortion is not primarily a legal problem; it is a moral one,” Reyes continued. “No matter what the law says, Scripture clearly conveys the value of each person from the point of conception.

“Every abortion is a human tragedy. It is tragic that unwanted pregnancies occur and that a woman would choose to end the life of the person she carries. We pray for a day when the value of human life from conception until natural death will be honored by people everywhere. It is important that Christians continue to support crisis pregnancy centers and ministries to single mothers.”

A ‘victory’ but for whom?

Activists from varied perspectives agreed the Supreme Court decision marked a “victory,” but they disagreed about for whom or what.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, called the court decision “another legal victory for the abortion lobby, coming at the expense of children, women and families.”

“Keeping abortion providers accountable should not be a political wedge issue,” Moore said. “This ruling is further proof how much more work the

pro-life movement has to do in the cause of life and human dignity.”

In contrast, Amelia Fulbright, an ordained Baptist minister and founder of Labyrinth Progressive Student Ministry at the University of Texas in Austin, viewed the decision as a victory for religious liberty.

“There is no such thing as a ‘Baptist view on abortion.’ Christians of good conscience hold many beliefs,” she insisted. “But I believe by protecting individual choice, today’s Supreme Court decision is a victory for foundational Baptist principles of religious freedom and individual conscience. It takes reproductive decision-making out of the hands of politicians and returns it to women—the ones whose lives are most affected. That’s a moral and social good.”

Similarly, Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, praised the court decision as “a huge victory for the dignity of women and their constitutional right to make their own health decisions.”

However, she predicted abortion opponents in Austin would continue efforts to restrict access to abortions.

“This fight continues until our lawmakers trust Texas women and families to make their own decisions about their health care and their future.”

Placing women’s health and safety at risk

Bishops with the Texas Catholic Conference, on the other hand, insisted the ruling “puts women at grave risk.”

“Surgical abortion is an invasive procedure that poses numerous and serious medical complications,” the bishops stated. “The state has a legitimate interest in ensuring the maximum level of safety for the woman subjected to the procedure and that viable emergency care is available if complications such as hemorrhage, infection, uterine perforation, blood

clots, cervical tears or allergic reactions occur.

“It is irresponsible for physicians to perform this procedure without being able to provide follow-up treatment for the associated complications.”

Likewise, Jonathan Saenz, president of Texas Values, emphasized women’s health and safety.

“This is a lawless and political decision by some Supreme Court justices who care more about the profits of abortion clinics than the safety of women,” Saenz said. “This latest episode of judicial activism has now made an abortion clinic in Texas one of the most dangerous places to be—not just for unborn children, but now for Texas women, as well.”