# Arkansas governor signs near-total ban on abortion

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**10 March 2021**

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson signed into law new legislation on Tuesday which will ban all abortions except to save the life of the mother. The law does not provide exceptions for rape or incest, and threatens those found in violation of the law with a fine of up to $100,000 and up to 10 years in prison.

The law will not go into effect until 91 days after the end of the current legislative session on May 3, providing plenty of time for legal challenges to the law to be heard in court.

This is the latest attempt by Republican-run states to contest the 1973 ruling of *Roe v. Wade*. Arkansas bill SB6 is specifically designed to violate the ruling and bring a challenge before the US Supreme Court. Governor Hutchinson said of the bill, "SB6 is in contradiction of the binding precedents of the U.S. Supreme Court, but it is the intent of the legislation to set the stage for the Supreme Court overturning current case law."

At least 14 other states have attempted similar legal challenges this year according to Politico, but all have seen their laws struck down by lower courts.

The Arkansas law follows similar legislation passed in South Carolina last month which was struck down by a federal judge. It revisits another attempt by the Arkansas legislature to pass a ban on abortions after 18 weeks in 2019 before that was also struck down by courts.

The current wave of anti-abortion laws comes after three right-wing Supreme Court justices were appointed by the President Donald Trump. The appointment of Brett Kavanaugh in the summer of 2018, giving the Supreme Court an openly anti-abortion majority, emboldened those seeking to challenge *Roe v. Wade* through the courts. Now that the appointment of Any Coney Barrett has given the ultra-right a 6–3 majority, Republican leaders believe that they have an even better chance of succeeding.

However, any one of the numerous anti-abortion laws that have been struck down across the country could be taken up by the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But Republican legislatures continue to pass such laws, even when they are almost guaranteed to be overturned by federal courts, in a continuous effort to manufacture a semblance of mass public support for overturning abortion rights across the country.

Arkansas State Senator Jason Rapert, who sponsored the bill, said that he hoped the law would compel the court to respond to "a very broad, widespread public outcry on the issue."

However, there is no such mass support for banning abortion. Research from Gallup indicates that the proportion of Americans who support total bans on abortion have remained around just 20 percent of the population since 1975. While many support some restrictions on abortion, 60 percent oppose overturning *Roe v. Wade* and 58 percent oppose fetal heartbeat laws. Even in southern states the majority does not support such laws, with just 47 percent in favor.

A May 2018 Gallup survey also found that 60 percent of Americans believe that abortion should be legal within the first three months of pregnancy.

Despite the lack of support for total bans on abortion, the Republican Party has based its assault on abortion rights on appeals to the most conservative and fervently religious sections of American society.

It must be stressed that the Republican Party has done nothing to protect the lives of working class Americans after they are born, and its policies of war and the persecution of immigrants betrays even the name "pro life."

If the Republican Party truly cared about the lives of

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unborn children then it would invest heavily in social programs and women’s health to ensure that every child is born into conditions where it will not have to suffer from poverty, hunger or abuse.

Instead, the Republican Party has made it a point of public policy to cut as many social services as possible.

For its part, the Democratic Party has also cut social programs and has failed to seriously defend abortion rights. The Democratic Party has consistently shied away from fighting to make abortion a permanent legal right. Instead, they have channeled all support for abortion rights behind *Roe v. Wade* and used appeals to protect a revocable court ruling to garner electoral support.

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