

On the record: 20-week abortion ban passes, life at conception stalls

In the Iowa Senate Tuesday, a bill banning most abortions past 20 weeks passed, while an opportunity to extend that protection to all babies from the moment of conception was defeated.

In the end, all 29 Republican senators voted to pass the 20-week bill, SF471, and they were joined by independent Sen. David Johnson of Osceola County and Democrat Sens. Tod Bowman of Jackson County and Kevin Kinney of Johnson County.

The 20-week ban has earned praise as an “important” vote, but it remains only a first step. Bob Vander Plaats of The FAMILY LEADER, for example, expressed “deep disappointment” that a Republican-controlled legislature has not gone further to defend human life.

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During debate, Sen. Jake Chapman of Dallas County, lead sponsor of the SF253 Life at Conception Act, sought to suspend Senate rules to amend the 20-week bill with wording very similar to SF253's life-at-conception language.

All Senate Democrats, the Senate's lone independent, and 13 Republicans opposed the suspension of rules, defeating Chapman's efforts. The 13 Republicans who voted against suspending the rules were as follows: Sens. Waylon Brown, Mark Chelgren, Mark Costello, Dan Dawson, Bill Dix, Jeff Edler, Thomas Greene, Tim Kapucian, Charles Schneider, Jason Schultz, Tom Shipley, Jack Whitver, and Dan Zumbach.

Sen. Schultz, a key vote in passing both SF2 (defunding abortion providers) and the Life at Conception Act through subcommittee, explained in a Facebook post why his name was surprisingly among those opposed to suspending the rules.

“I am a life-at-conception senator,” Schultz wrote. “I voted no on the suspension because I believe that path was not going to work, and I am not done working the regular process to see [life at conception] go to the floor and be voted on. Suspending the rules makes my path harder and offers less chance of success.”

Sen. Rick Bertrand of Woodbury County ultimately voted for the 20-week ban, but nonetheless expressed his “disappointment” that this legislature has yet to pass a life-at-conception bill.

“I rise tonight in support of Senate File 471. I do that, actually, very disappointed, though,” Bertrand said in a speech on the floor of the Senate. “I’ve been here seven years, and I’ve been waiting for this opportunity: [Republicans] control the House, we control the Senate, and we now control the [Governor’s Office]. And tonight, we decided this is the bill we as Republicans are going to send out. We’re going to send out a 20-week bill that basically has already failed in the House. ... This is the bill we settled on.”

[Click here to watch Sen. Bertrand’s speech now.](#)

Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of The FAMiLY LEADER and one of the spokespeople for Iowa’s Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders, echoed both Bertrand’s support for restricting abortion and his “disappointment” that Republicans “settled” for a 20-week ban.

“We are pleased that efforts aimed at saving babies’ lives are moving forward, but we agree with many Iowans in deep disappointment that Republicans have yet to stand for the very

first plank of their party's platform – life at conception,” said Vander Plaats. “We at The FAMiLY LEADER and the Coalition remain resolved in the defense of all life from the moment of conception. We will continue to press toward that goal, because we know that little girl in her mother's womb ... she's a baby.”

We want to hear your thoughts, but more importantly, your legislator needs to hear from you.

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