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Daschle approves of partial-birth ban; Senate may not discuss it this session

BY JON BENEDICT
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State Republicans urged Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle on Thursday to follow the U.S. House of Representatives' lead and push a bill banning certain types of abortions through the Senate.

The House on Wednesday approved the bill outlawing partial-birth abortions 274 to 151.

South Dakota Rep. Phyllis Heineman, R-Sioux Falls, and two city religious leaders – Rev. Ron Traub of First Assembly of God and Rev. Kim Lichty – applauded the House's decision.

"I don't think anyone would think the people of South Dakota are against banning this," Heineman said. "We're asking Sen. Daschle to listen and respect the will of the people."

Jay Carson, Daschle's press secretary, said the majority leader supports banning the procedure, but is not sure if there is room on

the Senate's schedule.

"Scheduling anything in the Senate these days is quite a difficult exercise. There isn't even enough days to get in everything that is already on it," Carson said.

Daschle and Sen. Tim Johnson have both voted to outlaw partial-birth abortions in the past. Johnson said he would support the House plan if it reached the Senate floor.

This is the fourth time in several years Congress had attempted banning the procedure. Lawmakers said they are hoping for better luck this time around.

President Clinton vetoed similar legislation twice and the Supreme Court ruled a similar law in Nebraska was unconstitutional in 2000.

The court said the law was too broad and failed to provide an exception for the woman's health. The version passed by the House on Wednesday spells out the pro-

cedures that should be outlawed.

Abortion opponents have gained support for a ban by informing the public of the procedure's ugliest aspect known as "dilation and extraction," where the fetus is pulled out of the uterus largely intact.

President Bush has said he will sign a bill to ban partial-birth abortions and Heineman said Congress needs to pass the legislation as soon as possible.

Although Daschle supports the ban, Carson said the senator is worried the House bill has not changed enough for the high court to rule it is constitutional.

"He has questions about its constitutionality. With the tight schedule in the Senate right now, Senator Daschle does not want to spend time on something that would not survive a constitutional test," Carson said.

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