

House Passes Abortion Restrictions for Minors

**Reuters**

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The House of Representatives passed legislation on Wednesday that would make it a crime to take a minor across state lines for an abortion and create a national requirement for parental notification for underage women seeking to terminate a pregnancy.

The vote was 270-157, with most Republicans and more than 50 Democrats backing it.

The bill is broader than legislation passed by the House several times in recent years that has died in the Senate. But with anti-abortion forces gaining strength in the last elections, people in both parties say it is now more likely that similar legislation would pass the Senate.

The House bill was approved after acrimonious exchanges in which Democrats accused Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee of grossly distorting their amendments.

"I've never seen anything like this," said an incensed New York Democratic Rep. Jerrold Nadler, who had offered an amendment exempting grandparents or clergy from prosecution if they helped a girl travel to get an abortion.

The committee report described the measure as one that "could be used by sexual predators to escape conviction."

The bill sponsored by Florida Republican Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen would make it a crime punishable by up to a year in jail for anyone other than a parent to take a teen-age girl across state lines for an abortion.

It went further than past legislation by adding the national parental notification requirements, even in roughly half the states that do not have them.

It would also require a 24-hour waiting period for a minor's abortion. Doctors could be prosecuted under the legislation.

The White House said in a statement the bill "is consistent with the administration's view that parents' efforts to be involved in their children's lives should be protected and the widespread belief ... that the parents of pregnant minors are best suited to provide them with counsel, guidance, and support."

Supporters of the bill said it was necessary to protect young women because an adult predator could impregnate a girl and then force her to have an abortion to hide the crime.

A doctor "cannot treat for a hangnail without parental consent or at least parental notification," said Wisconsin Republican Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. "Abortion is a very serious medical procedure. In many cases, complications arise."

Opponents said the bill was too far-reaching, and could further isolate young women by making it a crime for a caring adult, including a grandparent, from helping.

"This legislation would criminalize responsible adults," said Illinois Democratic Rep. Jan **Schakowsky**