House committee approves tough anti-abortion measure

Abortionists would face up to 10 years in prison at hard labor for violating the law under the bills.

The Legislature is misreading the public, she said. "This is the decade of choice. This law will kill women in Louisiana. As you can see behind us, it has angered women in this state."

He pointed to a crowd of about 50 women who were chanting "freedom of choice."

Physicians for abortion rights testified that a ban, if successful in the Supreme Court, would again lead to back-alley abortions that would result in the death of many women.

But pro-choicers said they were convinced the law would not be successful in overturning Roe vs. Wade.

"The state will wind up spending $2 million and we will look ridiculous," said Robin Rothrock, president of the League of Women Voters.

Jenkins, floor leader for the anti-abortionists, noted in summation that legal experts from Louisiana State University had testified that a law without exceptions and with criminal penalties would give Louisiana the vehicle to test Roe vs. Wade.

"I think the court is ready to do that," said Jenkins.

Abortionists would face up to 10 years in prison at hard labor for violating the law under the bills.

If one of the measures becomes law, immediate court challenges are expected.

In hearings, the House committee tried to build a record of testimony and evidence that will lead to a reversal of the 1973 Supreme Court decision granting women freedom of choice.

The committee heeded the plea of Rep. Woody Jenkins, D-Baton Rouge, who did not want amendments excepting rape and incest.

Gov. Buddy Roemer, calling himself "a pro-life," said he will veto any bill that doesn't contain those exceptions.

"I think the governor will change his mind. He's not pro-life if he doesn't," said Jenkins.

Similar bills now are on both the House and Senate floors.

The Louisiana Legislature has passed tough anti-abortion laws since statehood in 1812 but all were dismantled by the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I don't know what we can do right now," Terri Bartlett, director of Planned Parenthood of Louisiana, said after the committee decision. "From what we've seen so far, I would be afraid to question what we're going to see. We're very concerned because the House committee does not, in fact, trust the women of Louisiana."

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — The Senate and the House now have for debate bills that would prohibit abortions except in cases where pregnancy endangers a mother's life.

Supporters hope the finished product will provide a landmark court test.

House Criminal Justice Committee members on Thursday approved a bill without comment or objection. The vote ended two days of hearings in which anti-abortion and abortion rights advocates were each given four hours to state their cases.

Proponents on both sides of the issue, most of them women, jammed Capitol hallways and committee rooms during the Wednesday and Thursday hearings, lobbying lawmakers.

The lobbying is likely to pick up as the bill continues through the full House and the upper chamber. Anti-abortion sentiment is strong in both chambers.

The House will hear its bill next week, probably Thursday, proponents said.

A Senate committee approved a similar bill earlier in the week.

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If one of the measures becomes law, immediate court