



<https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/supporters-demand-hearing-for-nj->





A lame duck legislative session is one that meets briefly after the next session's legislators have been elected, but before they take office.

The chairman of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens committee, Sen. Joseph Vitale, D-Middlesex, said Thursday legislators are working on the language of the bill, and it won't be ready by Monday.

"The sponsors, leadership and chairpeople of committees have to determine what's the best course of action," Vitale said. "I and many others want this or some version to pass with a majority of both houses. We are not going to rush it."

While it has been around for more than a year, "there was no strong focus on it until recently. We're going to do our due diligence and do it the right way," Vitale said.

Assemblyman Herb Conaway, D-Burlington, who chairs the Assembly health committee and is a physician, could not be reached for comment.

“Even if you are completely pro-choice, from a business perspective you might ... be philosophically opposed to that,” Froomjian said. “It’s not an easy, clear-cut proposal that would easily pass.”

New Jersey case law goes beyond Roe v. Wade in offering protections to women seeking abortion in New Jersey, Vitale said, and he wants to be sure that more inclusive language is in the bill without going too far.

For example, New Jersey case law prohibits requiring parental notification for minors obtaining abortions, he said. And there are protections for late-term abortions when the women’s life is in danger or the fetus has died in the womb.

The Legislature meets for the last time before the holiday break for a voting session Dec. 22, Vitale said, and then again for voting sessions in early January. So if the language is right there is still time to pass something this session.

Wojtowicz said any bill introduced during a pandemic will have a harder road, but abortion stigma may be the main reason for the reluctance to bring this bill up in committee.

“There is a reluctance to talk about abortion care, even for folks who are pro-choice,” Wojtowicz said.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday heard the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization. It concerns the constitutionality of a Mississippi law outlawing abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, even though the Supreme Court in Planned Parenthood v. Casey ruled in 1992 that abortion cannot be outlawed prior to the fetus’s ability to survive outside the womb, which happens at about 24 weeks.

Many court watchers said the questioning indicated a willingness by a majority of judges to consider overturning the precedents set by Casey and even by Roe v. Wade.

That 1973 Supreme Court decision guaranteed a woman’s freedom to choose to have an abortion as a U.S. Constitutional right, and said the government cannot interfere in any way in abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy. It allowed some regulations in

the second trimester.

Critics have said the nearly 50-year-old decision was a judicial overstep, and the question of abortion law should be left to the states.



Murphy, Ciattarelli touring NJ as campaign coming to close

“We expect the decision in June,” Wojtowicz said of the Mississippi case, “but we can’t wait for it to happen. We have the chance to be proactive. We can’t always be reactive.”

Poorer women and the undocumented also need the law to pass quickly, she said, just to be able to access their rights.

The bill requires insurers to cover the entire cost with no co-pays, she said.

“The financial cost even with insurance can be so great, some women are forced to wait (to have the procedure) to collect enough money,” Wojtowicz said.

For those who are uninsured and cannot access Medicaid, such as undocumented women, a fund would be expanded to help provide birth control, abortion and prenatal care, Wojtowicz said.

REPORTER: Michelle Brunetti Post

609-272-7219

Supreme Court justices' quotes reveal their feelings on Roe v. Wade.

In my first job after college got paid to read the New York Times and summarize articles for an early online data base. First reporting job was with The Daily Record in Parsippany. I have also worked in nonprofits, and have been with The Press since 1990.