

Panel passes abortion, stem cell research ban bills

February 4 2015

A bill to further restrict abortion in Oklahoma and another to make embryonic stem cell research illegal both cleared a House committee on Wednesday, despite concerns from a doctor on the panel.

While activists gathered at the Capitol for the annual anti-abortion Rose Day rally, the House Public Health Committee voted mostly along party lines to approve both bills. An exception was Rep. Doug Cox, a Grove Republican and an emergency room physician who opposed both measures.

One bill would increase from 24 to 72 hours the amount of time a woman must wait before receiving an abortion after receiving certain information about the procedure, including the age of the fetus, risks involved and that ultrasound and heart tone monitoring are available.

Rep. Lisa Billy, R-Lindsay, said the purpose of the bill is to "empower women" by giving them more time to consider the implications of an abortion. But Cox said it amounted to government intrusion into a medical decision that should be between a woman and her doctor.

The other bill would make it a felony crime to perform embryonic stem cell research in Oklahoma. The bill is opposed by many doctors and business groups like the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, who argue it could impede scientific research in Oklahoma.

House author Rep. Dan Fisher, R-El Reno, said he believes the

destruction of human embryos equates to the taking of a human life and should be illegal.

Both bills now proceed to the House floor. Similar stem cell research bans have been derailed in the Legislature in previous years.

House Bill 1379: bit.ly/1z9ZVYp

House Bill 1409: bit.ly/1DG13r4

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