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North Dakota governor signs strict abortion laws

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NCR Today

North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple on Tuesday signed into law three abortion-restricting bills, most notably one banning abortions as early as six weeks into a pregnancy.

House Bill 1456 prohibits abortions after the detection of a fetal heartbeat. The other bills signed ban abortions for sex selection or a genetic abnormality and require physicians performing abortions hold admitting and staff privileges at an area hospital.

Bismarck Bishop David Kagan applauded the governor's move in a statement released by the North Dakota Catholic Conference.

"The protection of all human life from the moment of conception to natural death is the primary purpose of government. All persons, including our elected officials, are obligated to unceasingly seek protection of this basic human right," he said.

"I applaud the members of the North Dakota legislature who bravely supported measures to extend protections to unborn human life and to advance the health of women. I also applaud Governor Jack Dalrymple for signing SB 2305, HB 1305, and HB 1456. His signature affirms our state's commitment to the protection of all human life," said Kagan, who also serves as the apostolic administrator to the Fargo diocese.

In the days following the bills' passage, Kagan in a video on his diocesan website applauded the state legislature for their work and encouraged Catholics to urge the governor sign the bills into law.

According to The Associated Press, the new laws' passage was partially driven by an attempt to close the state's only abortion clinic, located in Fargo. Supporters view the state's strict abortion laws -- the

heartbeat law, in particular -- as "a direct challenge" to *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortions until the fetus is considered viable, or about 22 to 24 weeks, AP reported.

Among those voices was Dalrymple himself, who in a statement said, "Although the likelihood of [HB 1456] surviving a court challenge remains in question, this bill is nevertheless a legitimate attempt by a state legislature to discover the boundaries of *Roe v. Wade*," acknowledging that the constitutionality of the measure "is an open question."

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