



North Carolina NOW Legislative Update 15 February 2021

Important bills concerning child marriage (HB41 and SB41) have been introduced with bipartisan support. The same bill has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. Under current law 16-year-old minors may marry with parental consent and 14-year-old children may marry if there has been cohabitation, pregnancy, or a child born to the parties. This scandalous law allows sexual abuse of minors provided that the abuse is followed by marriage. Without marriage, North Carolina law treats sex acts with children by adults as felonious sexual assault. North Carolina has the dubious distinction of being tied with Alaska as the state that allows child marriage at the youngest age. This proposed revision to the law would raise the marriage age to 18 with no exceptions. For more information, see: <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/537390-north-carolina-state-legislators-introduce-bill-to-end-child-marriage>.

We are happy to report that the bill to ratify the ERA in North Carolina is now co-sponsored by all Democrats in the North Carolina House.

The South Carolina state Senate has passed a fetal heartbeat bill and the bill is expected to easily pass the South Carolina House. One witness, Melissa Anne Cunningham Sereque, dramatically displayed and discussed the instrument inserted into the woman in order to detect cellular electrical impulses that the sponsors of the bill falsely label a “fetal heartbeat.” She could barely contain her rage about the content of the bill and the misleading testimony offered by those who supported it, including the Lt. Governor who was sitting directly behind her to hear her rebuke. Here a link to her testimony. She is speaking rapidly because she is allotted only 3 minutes for her presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj3qWOX6afQ&feature=youtu.be>

In response to the insurrection at the national Capitol on January 6, a bill has been introduced (HB47) that would allow legislators and some others to carry concealed weapons in the legislative building. We may be seeing gunfights on Jones St.

HOUSE BILLS

HB8 (=SB15) NC Adopt ERA: An act to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.
1/28/21: House Rules

HB31 Detected Heartbeat/Prohibit Abortion: An act to prohibit abortion after the embryo has a "detectable heartbeat" except in medical emergencies. This bill is a de facto ban on all abortions because a "fetal heartbeat" can be detected at six to seven weeks of pregnancy—generally before a woman even knows she is pregnant. The term "fetal heartbeat" itself is controversial because at six weeks the embryonic cardio-vascular system is so immature that what is present has been described as "a group of cells with electrical activity." Another problem with these bills is that when a so-called "heartbeat" can be detected varies widely depending on the technology used. In 2015 North Dakota's fetal heartbeat bill was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. New versions have been re-introduced in several states in hopes that one will reach the Supreme Court and be upheld.
2/01/21: Health

HB33 Broaden Applicability of DV Statutes: It is shocking, but North Carolina's current domestic violence statutes apply only to couples of the opposite sex—which means same sex couples are denied both protection and services. This act remedies the situation by removing gendered language from the law.
2.02/21: Judiciary 3

HB41 (=SB36) Amend Lawful Age to Marry/18 Years of Age: An overdue reform of North Carolina's marriage law that currently allows marriage at age 16 with parental consent and at age 14 if there has been cohabitation, pregnancy or a child born to the parties who marry. This law would raise the age to 18 with no exceptions.
2/03/21: Families, Children, and Aging

SENATE BILLS

SB15 (=HB8) NC ADOPT ERA: An act to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.
1/28/21: Filed

SB36 (=HB41) Amend Lawful Age to Marry/18 Years of Age: An overdue reform of North Carolina's marriage law that currently allows marriage at age 16 with parental consent and at age 14 if there has been cohabitation, pregnancy or a child born to the parties who marry. This law would raise the age to 18 with no exceptions.
02/02/2021: Senate Rules