

MADISON - State Republicans are looking to fast-track a bill that would ban abortions after 20 weeks, potentially bringing the proposal to a vote before the Legislature begins debate on the state budget in June.

State Senate President Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin) told the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network last week that she hopes to see a vote on the proposal, which has more than 30 co-sponsors, as soon as possible.

"As soon as we can do the logistics of sorting out committee meetings and getting those things done, we will be proceeding," Lazich said.

The bill includes penalties of up to $10,000 and 31/2 years in jail for anyone who is convicted of performing an abortion after 20 weeks. Lazich said research shows a fetus begins to feel pain at that point. It includes a medical emergency exception for the mother's life, but not for rape or incest.

"We will not be allowed to do intentional abortions anymore to rip a child apart after the point that they can feel that pain," said state Rep. Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum), another bill sponsor. Lazich and Kremer were jointly interviewed on WisconsinEye.

Nicole Safar, a spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin, said in a conference call with Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporters this month that abortions after 20 weeks are rare and the legislation would likely affect fewer than 100 women a year. But she added that the ban would take away choices for women facing difficult situations, such as discovering fatal fetal anomalies and health risks for themselves.

As Senate president, Lazich assigns bills to committees and sits on the panel that decides which bills will come to a floor vote. Lazich is a lead sponsor of the bill .

Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who is preparing a likely run for the presidency, said in March he would sign the measure if it came to his desk.