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The state of Arkansas passed a law in 2013 restricting access to abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

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**Transcript**
Abortion Rights Groups Challenge Arkansas Law

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
This ongoing debate over abortion is making news again tonight. The effort by some states to reduce access to abortion has just reached a new level with Arkansas passing what is now the nation’s toughest law, restricting access to abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy. NBC’s Pete Williams reports tonight on this latest strategy by abortion opponents.

PETE WILLIAMS, reporting:
Abortion rights groups say they're already preparing their legal challenge to the new Arkansas law now by far the strictest in the nation.

REPRESENTATIVE ANN CLEMMER (R-Arkansas): This law is reflective of what the people of Arkansas believe. And I believe-- you know, and that’s what we are here for.

P. WILLIAMS: Enacted over the veto of the state’s democratic governor, Mike Beebe, it restricts access after 12 weeks of pregnancy when roughly 20% of the state’s abortions are performed. The sponsor of the law says 12 weeks is when a fetus has a measurable heartbeat, the sign of life.

SENATOR JASON RAPERT (R-Arkansas): And my hope is, is that the conscience of America will awaken to this issue and that we will figure out a way to have more balance. And that’s what the Heartbeat Bill is about.

WILLIAMS: Abortion opponents in other states say recent research shows that long before a fetus is viable, it can feel pain, though many medical experts say that’s not the case. Eight states now have so-called fetal pain laws in effect, barring abortions after 20 weeks in all but exceptional cases, such as a danger to the mother’s life. Similar laws in three other states--Arizona, Georgia, and Idaho--have been blocked by the courts. Abortion opponents are scoring other victories too, putting new restrictions on clinics, requiring more parental consent and imposing waiting periods.

NANCY NORTHUP (Center for Reproductive Rights President and CEO): Anti-choice politicians have been chipping away at access to abortion services for years. What Arkansas has done with this ban on abortion within the first trimester is not just chipping away. It's taking a sledgehammer to the guaranteed rights of Roe v. Wade.

P. WILLIAMS: After failing to get much traction in the courts, opponents of abortion are now finding success in state legislatures, still hoping to find the right case and the right time to get Roe v. Wade.
overturned. Pete Williams, NBC News, at the Supreme Court.