

# Right to life activist in state

By CALLA WAHLQUIST Aug. 24, 2013, 11:36 p.m.



Bette Grande

THE architect of some of the United States' toughest anti-abortion laws will visit Tasmania this week as part of a right to life campaign against proposed laws to decriminalise abortion.

North Dakota Republican legislator Bette Grande sponsored the foetal heartbeat bill and the genetic defects bill, to ban abortions after a heartbeat has been detected and ban termination on the grounds of gender or foetal abnormality.

Both laws passed and received the assent of the North Dakota governor earlier this year, but are tied up in legal challenges.

Mrs Grande's visit comes as the Tasmanian Parliament considers proposed laws to decriminalise abortion on the basis existing abortion laws, listed as exemptions in the Criminal Code, are too restrictive.

The Reproductive Health Bill passed the lower house in April and is now before a Legislative

Council committee.

Abortion is a federal issue in the US and has been considered a constitutional right since the much-challenged 1973 case Roe vs Wade.

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But states are allowed to regulate its practice and North Dakota is one of several conservative states to pass laws designed to restrict access and show the state is ``anti-abortion."''

Mrs Grande said the foetal heartbeats could be detected as early as five weeks into the pregnancy.

``We, as a society, have determined over time and have always stated that a beating heartbeat is considered life," she said.

Mrs Grande said the push in conservative states to restrict access to abortion stemmed from a greater understanding of the developmental phrases of pregnancy, and improvements neo-natal medicine.

She also said people were just starting to understand the affects of termination, linking it to higher rates of breast cancer, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide.

Mrs Grande said anti-abortion laws did not impinge upon a woman's right to have control over her body.

``That right is still in place, because up until the conception they have the right to all those things," she said.

``But at the point of conception, particularly when we have a heartbeat and they can feel pain, then it's not just one person, it's two whole separate persons.

``We need to get past whether it's a person's right to sever the life of a whole and separate human being because of another perceived right."''

Mrs Grande will give a talk at Parliament House in Hobart on Tuesday night.

Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne, who sponsored Tasmania's abortion reforms as a private member's bill, said Tasmanian politicians should not be influenced by Mrs Grande's visit.

``Everybody has a right to express an opinion but the views of the 86 per cent of Tasmanians who think terminations should be a matter for a woman and her doctor should carry immeasurably more weight than the view of a far right politician from North Dakota," Ms O'Byrne said.

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