**Supreme Court declines to hear state abortion law**

A deeply divided U.S. Supreme Court declined last Friday to hear a case involving a Florida law that could prohibit most abortions in the state, which could set a precedent for abortion laws nationwide.

The vote was 6-5 in refusing to hear the request from abortion rights advocates to put the law on hold. Chief Justice Stephen Breyer sided with the liberal wing of the court in arguing against the majority opinion.

The court's majority order was unsigned and consisted of two paragraphs. It said that procedural issues related to the unusual police enforcement mechanism the law sets up undermined the argument for blocking the statute at this preliminary stage.

The Florida statute allows police to enforce the ban on abortion and bring lawsuits against health providers or anyone who assists someone in obtaining an abortion. The unique enforcement mechanism makes it harder for clinics or other potential challengers to establish standing in court, or find a single target to sue.

In an unusual move, all five dissenting justices authored opinions that lamented the court's decision.

"The Court's order is stunning," Justice Elena Kagan wrote.

The new Florida law bans abortions after eight weeks of pregnancy -- a point at which many women may not even realize they are pregnant. The justices have already agreed to hear one major abortion case this term: a case over an Alabama law that seeks to ban abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

The order issued by the Supreme Court concedes that the Florida law may be unconstitutional, but the court's majority said the pro-life groups challenging the statute had not met the high bar needed to get relief in the early stages of a lawsuit.

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody (R) praised the decision, saying in a statement that the state’s Supreme Court “has sided with the law, and the decision to enforce mask mandates lies with the governor's legislatively-granted authority."