

Circumcision ban could make ballot in SF

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SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- This November, San Francisco residents may have the opportunity to make their city the first in the nation to make it illegal for doctors to perform circumcisions.

As you can imagine, this is a controversial idea, especially among some religious groups. Tuesday was the deadline to submit signatures to try to qualify measures for the November ballot. The backers of the proposed ban on circumcising boys under the age of 18 are confident the city will verify they have enough signatures to bring their proposal to the voters.

"I will never really know how my body was supposed to look, how it was supposed to feel, how it was supposed to be," says Jonathon Conte, who calls himself a victim.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says the medical benefits of circumcision are not significant enough for the academy to recommend the procedure. Backers of the ban consider it genital mutilation.

"It's a cosmetic procedure. It's totally unnecessary. It's excruciatingly painful and it's harmful," Lloyd Schofield says. "We think the owner of the penis should be able to make the decision."

On the other hand, Jewish mother Asya Komarova says, "I think it's up to the families and to the rabbis."

Many Jews and Muslims consider circumcision a core of their religions. The Jewish Community Relations Council plans to fight if the measure makes it on the ballot.

"The problem is banning my right or somebody else's right, outright, to practice what has been a ritual practice for thousands of years," says councilmember Abby Michelson Porth.

The controversy has once again put San Francisco in the national spotlight to

include a skit on the Daily Show.

"You can leave your heart in San Francisco, but your foreskin is going home with you," Lewis Black joked.

Veteran city hall observer Alex Clemens says San Francisco has a long tradition of putting unusual issues on the ballot.

"We voted to find out whether a puppet could join a cop on his rounds. We voted whether or not we should name a sewage treatment plant after a former president. This is kind of par for the course," he says.

For the backers of the ban, this is no laughing matter. If their proposed measure is approved by voters, violators, including doctors, could face a fine up to \$1,000 and a year in jail.

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