

Arizona Abortion-Drug Restrictions to Stay Blocked Pending Appeal

Enforcement of Arizona regulations curbing access to **abortion-inducing drugs** by prohibiting off-label uses of the medication will remain on hold while a legal challenge to those rules proceeds under judicial review, a federal appeals court ruled on Tuesday.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found that abortion rights advocates, including Planned Parenthood, had shown a likelihood of success in their claim that Arizona's law imposes an undue burden on a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy.

The unanimous ruling by the three-judge panel reverses a lower-court decision in late March rejecting a request by **Planned Parenthood** and a women's health clinic in Tucson to block Arizona's abortion pill regulations from taking effect while the plaintiffs sought to overturn the restrictions.

The San Francisco-based appeals court in April had sided with Planned Parenthood in temporarily blocking enforcement of the regulations until the 9th Circuit judges could hear arguments in the case.

A spokeswoman for state Attorney General Tom Horne said the state was weighing whether to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The regulations under challenge, adopted in a Republican-backed 2012 abortion statute, mandate that any drugs prescribed for the termination of a pregnancy in Arizona be used in strict accordance with U.S. Food and Drug Administration protocol and instructions on the label.

The FDA has approved the so-called abortion pill RU-486 for use within seven weeks' gestation. Arizona's rules would outlaw its use at the direction of doctors who wish to prescribe it for later in a pregnancy.

At issue in this case is a physician's discretion to go "off-label" and use the drug as the doctor believes best under the circumstances.

Arizona's **abortion** controls have ranked among the most restrictive in the nation. A federal appeals court last year struck down as unconstitutional another part of the same 2012 law banning most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

In April of this year, Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law a separate measure allowing state health authorities to conduct surprise inspections of abortion clinics without first obtaining a search warrant.

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