

Court Ruling Shuttters 13 Texas Abortion Clinics

A federal appeals court ruled on Thursday that Texas could begin enforcing restrictions on abortion clinics that critics of the new rules say will force all but seven of the facilities in the state to shut down.

A panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled that Texas could enforce the requirement that clinics have certain hospital-like settings for surgeries while the court weighs the constitutionality of the 2013 state law.

A lower court in August ruled the “ambulatory surgical center requirement” unconstitutional, finding it placed an undue burden on women seeking abortions. Texas officials appealed that ruling.

Abortion rights advocates, who have argued the requirement will leave almost 1 million Texas women of reproductive age at least 150 miles (240 km) from an abortion clinic, were critical of Thursday’s ruling.

Supporters of the law, who say the rules will reduce complications and improve patient care, applauded the ruling.

“This decision is a vindication of the careful deliberation by the Texas Legislature to craft a law to protect the health and safety of Texas women,” Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott’s office, which is defending the law, said in a statement.

Abbott, a Republican, is running for governor against Democrat Wendy Davis, a state senator who vaulted to national prominence for mounting an 11-hour filibuster in an unsuccessful effort to kill the measure.

Under the newly enforceable rules, Texas clinics will have to meet a set of building standards ranging from widening halls to having facilities for certain surgeries that abortion rights advocates say are unnecessary, especially when an abortion is medically induced.

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