

Kansas Abortion Clinic Reopens Four Years After George Tiller's Murder

A Kansas **abortion clinic** closed since the 2009 murder of its doctor, one of the few physicians in the country who performed **late-term abortions**, reopened on Wednesday in Wichita, the owner of the clinic said.

The clinic has been closed since **Dr. George Tiller** was slain in a Wichita church in May 2009. Scott Roeder is serving a life sentence over the slaying after testifying that he killed Tiller, 67, to stop abortions.

Abortions at the new clinic, called South Wind Women's Center, will be done through the 14th week of pregnancy, even though abortions are legal through about 20 weeks under Kansas law, said Julie Burkhardt, director of the Trust Women Foundation, which owns the clinic.

"It's just our comfort level. It's where our doctors want it," said Burkhardt, who had worked closely with Tiller and had been a spokeswoman for his clinic. She said the "vast majority" of abortions are sought within the 14-week window.

The opening of the clinic marks the latest salvo in the broad national fight over **abortion** in the United States that has seen lawmakers in several states pass new restrictions on abortion in the past two years.

Those have included laws approved in the last month in North Dakota and Arkansas that are seen as direct challenges to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* that legalized abortion in 1973.

Three doctors will do abortions at the clinic, Burkhardt said,

but their names have not yet been released.

Burkhart said no abortions were performed on Wednesday. The clinic plans to release more details about its services on Thursday, and gynecological care other than abortions is also available.

Long Distances

Since the clinic closed, women in the Wichita area have had to travel at least 150 miles to Oklahoma City or Kansas City for abortions at any point in their pregnancies, Burkhart said.

"This is lessening the burden on women, their families and their pocketbooks," Burkhart said. She said that women who want later-term abortions will be referred to doctors in places such as Kansas City and Tulsa, Oklahoma, Burkhart said.

Anti-abortion groups tried to block or delay the reopening of the clinic through a rezoning petition and complaints to the city that permits hadn't been issued as required for the clinic's indoor remodeling.

Picketing was constant at the Tiller clinic. Burkhart said she did not see anyone carrying signs Wednesday.

"They were out praying and walking around the perimeter of the building," she said.

Mark Gietzen, a Wichita resident and chairman of the Kansas Coalition for Life, said he was sad to see the clinic reopen but that his group won't picket until abortions begin at the site. Gietzen said callers to the clinic have been told they cannot yet schedule an abortion.

"We are calling it a soft opening," Gietzen said. "We will be out there in full force when they start doing abortions."

The clinic is in a single-story, nearly windowless building located between a busy highway and a neighborhood of single-

family homes.

North Dakota in late March became the first state to approve a ban on most abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, about six weeks into pregnancy, and the first to ban abortions solely because of fetal genetic anomalies.

Earlier that month, Arkansas adopted a law mostly banning the procedure after 12 weeks of pregnancy as both houses of the state legislature overrode the governor's veto.

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