

Texas Suspends First Doctor Under New Abortion Law

Texas has suspended a Houston doctor's license for performing **abortions** without getting privileges to admit patients to a nearby hospital, the first such move under a new state abortion law that went into effect last year.

The Texas Medical Board said on Friday that physician Theodore Herring performed 268 abortions between Nov. 6 and Feb. 7 without the right to admit patients to an authorized hospital within 30 miles (48 kms) of where the procedures took place.

The Texas Hospital Association, representing 450 hospitals and health systems, says admitting privileges "assure the hospital that the physician has the appropriate qualifications to provide services to patients in the hospital," and unnecessary because women experiencing abortion complications can go to a hospital emergency room and will be treated.

"The suspension was effective immediately," the board said, adding that Herring would pose a threat to public welfare by continuing to practice medicine.

Herring was not immediately available for comment.

Opponents of the law said that given the vast size of Texas, the admitting privileges requirement places an unjust burden on clinics and punishes people in rural parts of the state where medical care can be scarce.

Those who back the law said the requirement is necessary to protect the health of women in case there is a complication with an abortion.

The law also requires **abortion clinics** to meet heightened building standards, bans abortion after 20 weeks and requires

strict adherence to federal guidelines in prescribing abortion pills.

Texas Right to Life, an anti-abortion group, called on the board to suspend more physicians.

“Dr. Herring is not the only abortionist practicing illegally in Texas,” it said.

Heather Busby, a spokeswoman with NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, said the admitting privileges requirement is “medically unnecessary and does nothing to improve what is one of the safest outpatient procedures.”

Its “true purpose is to force **abortion** providers out of business and has already lead to the closure of nearly one-third of Texas’ safe, legal abortion clinics,” she said in an email.

The law drew national attention when Democratic state Senator **Wendy Davis** spoke against it in the Legislature for several hours last year, gaining her a nationwide following and propelling her to run for Texas governor.

A federal court heard an appeal from **Planned Parenthood** and other advocacy groups last month to relax restrictions that have caused a dozen clinics to suspend services.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals court, which is hearing the current appeal, on Oct. 31 reinstated a restriction that was blocked by a lower court. This allowed nearly all of the state’s sweeping anti-abortion law to go into effect.

The case then went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to block implementation of the law on November 4, allowing it to go into effect.

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