

Louisiana following judge's order on abortion law

September 2 2014, by Melinda Deslatte

The Louisiana health department will follow a federal judge's order and refrain from immediately penalizing doctors who are trying to comply with a new abortion law that requires them to obtain admitting privileges at a local hospital, a spokeswoman said Monday.

U.S. District Judge John deGravelles issued a temporary restraining order late Sunday that blocked enforcement of the new [law](#) that took effect Monday. The law requires physicians at all five [abortion](#) clinics in Louisiana to obtain privileges to admit patients to a hospital within 30 miles (80 kilometers) of the clinic where the doctor works.

State Department of Health and Hospitals spokeswoman Olivia Watkins told The Associated Press on Monday that the agency won't take action against any provider who shows he or she has applied for such privileges.

It was not immediately clear whether doctors from all five clinics have applied for hospital privileges.

Clinics in Shreveport, Bossier City and Metairie sued the state, seeking to block the law. The lawsuit claims doctors haven't had enough time to obtain the privileges and the law likely would close all five clinics. Clinics in New Orleans and Baton Rouge were not plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The judge said he will call a status conference within 30 days to check on the progress of the plaintiffs' applications and to schedule a hearing to

consider a request for an order blocking the law while the case is in court.

Admitting privileges laws have been enacted in several states across the South.

Supporters say the laws are designed to protect women's safety by providing continuity of care in case a patient is hospitalized. Opponents say complications from abortion are rare, and hospitals are already obligated to treat people seeking emergency care. Opponents also say admitting privileges laws give hospitals the power to decide whether an abortion clinic can stay open.

Some hospitals will not grant the privileges to out-of-state physicians, such as those who work at some abortion clinics in the South. Some religious-affiliated hospitals will not grant privileges to abortion providers.

A panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a Texas admitting [privileges](#) law that's similar to the one in Louisiana. But in July, a different panel of the 5th Circuit voted to block Mississippi's law, which would have closed the state's only [abortion clinic](#), saying every state must guarantee the right to an abortion.

The 5th Circuit is one of the most conservative federal appeals courts in the nation. It also handles cases from Louisiana.

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