

FINAL EDITION

State suspends doctor's license

By **Gail Bozard**
News Journal

The state suspended abortion doctor Steven Chase Brigham's medical license through an emergency order issued Friday by the Agency of Health Care Administration.

The Connecticut doctor replaced Dr. John Britton after radical abortion opponent Paul Hill gunned down Britton July 29 outside The Ladies Center, a Pensacola clinic that offers abortion services.

BRIGHAM WAS served the notice Friday at the Pensacola Regional Airport.

"This shuts him down right now," said Ed Towey, spokesman for the state agency that issued the suspension. "This

emergency order instantly stops him from practicing."

Neither Brigham nor his attorney could be reached Saturday.

Brigham has a right to a hearing on the suspension within 14 days if he requests one, Towey said. The board will make a final decision about Brigham's license whether he fights the suspension or not.

The suspension became effective late Friday afternoon when the director of Agency of Health Care Administration

signed it, Towey said. But Towey did not immediately know the specific reasons cited in the document.

The agency issued the suspension in response to a completed investigation by a legal team.

"I'LL HAVE to have some serious allegations in it for them to issue an emergency suspension," Towey said. "When you go to these emergency suspensions, you have a case already built, and you have to be ready to go to court right away. They investigate these things thoroughly," Towey said. "The standard of proof is as high as any court."

A pending case against Brigham in New York has triggered action by New Jersey,

Pennsylvania, Georgia and California medical officials. New York revoked his license in November, he let his license expire in Georgia and he voluntarily stopped practicing in Pennsylvania, according to state medical board records.

In December, he agreed to stop practicing in New Jersey until an administrative law judge rules on his fitness as a physician. The current status of the case is not available Saturday.

The accusations include injuring women in New York during late second-trimester abortions, false advertising, sanitary practices and offering to perform an illegal third-trimester abortion.

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FROM 1A

The Florida Board of Medicine said Dec. 21 that Brigham had voluntarily stopped performing abortions at The Ladies Center based on information provided by clinic staff.

Clinic officials have refused to confirm Brigham worked at the clinic following the shootings, but director Linda Taggart acknowledged it in December by telling the News Journal he had not worked at the clinic for months.

Abortion opponents Mike and Vicky Conroy have contended Brigham either never left, or returned after the December announcement.

Brigham's license remained current in Florida until Friday, so if he had stopped, he could have resumed performing abortions at any time without notifying the Florida Board of Medicine, the board's Professional Administrator Barbara Kemp said Jan. 20.

A complaint triggered the investigation, which is not public record until action is taken by the board. The Conroys complained to state officials in Tallahassee about Brigham more than once. But exactly what prompted the suspension was not available Saturday, because the agencies responsible for medical licenses were closed.

A woman at Taggart's house refused to open the door Saturday to a News Journal reporter.