

# Women fear for their safety and loss of rights if US abortion laws change

One doctor explains that the abortion situation in Oklahoma is already "at the level of a developing country."

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Denise gave herself an abortion when she was 16. Thousands resort to self-induced abortions in the US every year.

App

By Cordelia Lynch, US correspondent

## Women are living in fear that their reproductive rights will be overruled if abortion reform laws are revoked in America.

Sky News has spoken to women who have performed their own abortions, driven hundreds of miles to receive safe treatment and who have spent their lives fighting to ensure women retain rights over their own bodies.

Oklahoma is one of the states where abortion is a crucial subject - with one doctor saying: "The situation [here] is literally what I would call at the level of a developing country."

"Some of the women here today come from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas. It's crazy and then they wait seven hours because I am only one person."



Dr Andrea Chiavarini gets flown into states to perform abortions. She described Oklahoma as 'at the level of a developing country.'

During the confirmation hearing of Donald Trump's Supreme Court pick

Brett Kavanaugh - where he was grilled over the allegations of sexual assault made against him - he refused to answer how he would rule if the Supreme Court were to once again assess the legality of abortion.

Some evangelicals and conservatives in the country hope that he will help overturn Roe v Wade, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling that made abortion legal in the US.



Dr Andrea Chiavarini travels across the country to help women get safe abortions

His past views, reinforced by testimony before the Senate judiciary committee, suggest he would permit government to impose stricter regulation of abortion.

Sky News gained rare access to a clinic in Oklahoma City where providers are deeply concerned about the future.

At Trust Women South Wind Women's Center Oklahoma City, there is deep concern that women's access to abortion may be about to be further curtailed in the state.



Chief executive of Trust Women, Julie Burkhart: Oklahoma is already 'part of an abortion desert'

The chief executive of Trust Women, Julie Burkhart, tells me it is already "part of an abortion desert".

She has been fighting for women's reproductive rights for years and oversees clinics in states where the political climate has often proved hostile.

Security here is extremely tight. If you're working on the frontline like Julie, threats are never far away.

The clinic is extremely busy.

In just one day, Dr Andrea Chiavarini will perform more than 20 abortions.

She has two days to get through a long list of women who have travelled from other states to get treatment.



Access to legal abortions could become history in the US

She too has been on a journey - flying in from another state as she spends her weeks criss-crossing the country to areas where it has become harder to get access to an abortion.

One woman is here with her partner and explains she has driven six hours to be here.

She is married, studying and doesn't feel ready to have a child.

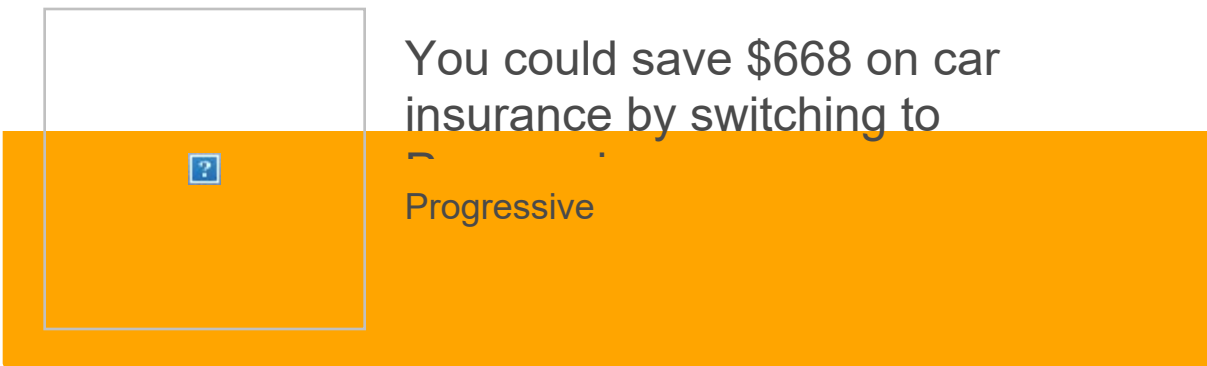
When she looked for help in her home state, she said she received an aggressive response.

"It was very hard. I called about 10 clinics, five in my town and another five in another town next to ours.

"They wouldn't give any information about anything related to abortion. They would even be mean talking about it."

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You could save \$668 on car insurance by switching to Progressive

But Oklahoma's Republican representative Justin Humphrey, who is hopeful that it could soon be made harder for women like her to have an abortion, tells Sky News: "I am very much opposed to abortion."



Republican Justin Humphrey: 'I am very much opposed to abortion'

"I think fathers should be given a say so. Fathers should be advised. You have at least got to advise a father and give him an opportunity to have some say so," he adds.

Neither he nor the staff at Trust Women South Wind Women's Center in Oklahoma City think a radical change is immediately likely.

But both sides do believe states will soon be given more power to decide the rules governing abortion access.

Some women are already so desperate they are taking things into their own hands.



## Why doctors are afraid to give patients abortions in US

Medics are opting not to perform abortions as it is too controversial

When Denise in Mississippi was 16, she performed a self-induced abortion.

She met a woman who gave her a herb which she drank over a period of days.

Denise was at boarding school and her family was well known; she was too terrified to go through with the pregnancy.

She recounts the process in vivid detail, including carrying the foetus in a cloth past a graveyard by her school.

Denise says she knows others who have resorted to similar things.

"I know people who have used bleach and vodka, people who have tried to use herbs they heard about on the internet," she says.



## 'States must step up and defend our rights to abortion'

Julie Burkhart, who runs US abortion clinics, says people must pressure their state senators to ensure their rights are retained

Those highly dangerous choices could kill them and they're potentially

breaking the law too.

Many feel like they're running out of options and that the rights they do have could soon be rewritten.

If Roe is overturned, abortion law would be set on a state-by-state basis. That is something the president, who nominated Mr Kavanaugh, has said he wants.

In 2003, in a memo Mr Kavanaugh wrote that had only recently been made public, he acknowledged that the Supreme Court "can always overrule" Roe v Wade.



Brett Kavanaugh could be a significant player in the abortion ruling

"I am not sure that all legal scholars refer to Roe as the settled law of the land at the Supreme Court level since Court can always overrule its precedent."

He added that some conservative justices then on the court "would do so".

Nine states have laws banning abortion that would become effective if Roe



v Wade is overturned and four states have laws intended to ban abortion should the US Supreme Court overturn the legal right to abort.

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One of the changes that could happen if the law is revoked is that women would face additional requirements that could delay the procedure or instate stricter rules for physicians.

According to The Guttmacher Institute, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wisconsin have laws that were passed prior to Roe v Wade.

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