

Abortion "Mega-Clinic" | Ex-Dallas Cop Guilty | Impeachment Inquiry | Hong Kong Violence | Trump Border Measures | WATCH: Resort Worker Dead

Planned Parenthood has been building a secret abortion "mega-clinic" in Illinois

BY KATE SMITH
OCTOBER 2, 2019 / 7:02 AM / CBS NEWS

After over a year of secret construction, Planned Parenthood announced its newest abortion facility

View CBS News In



CBS News App

OPEN

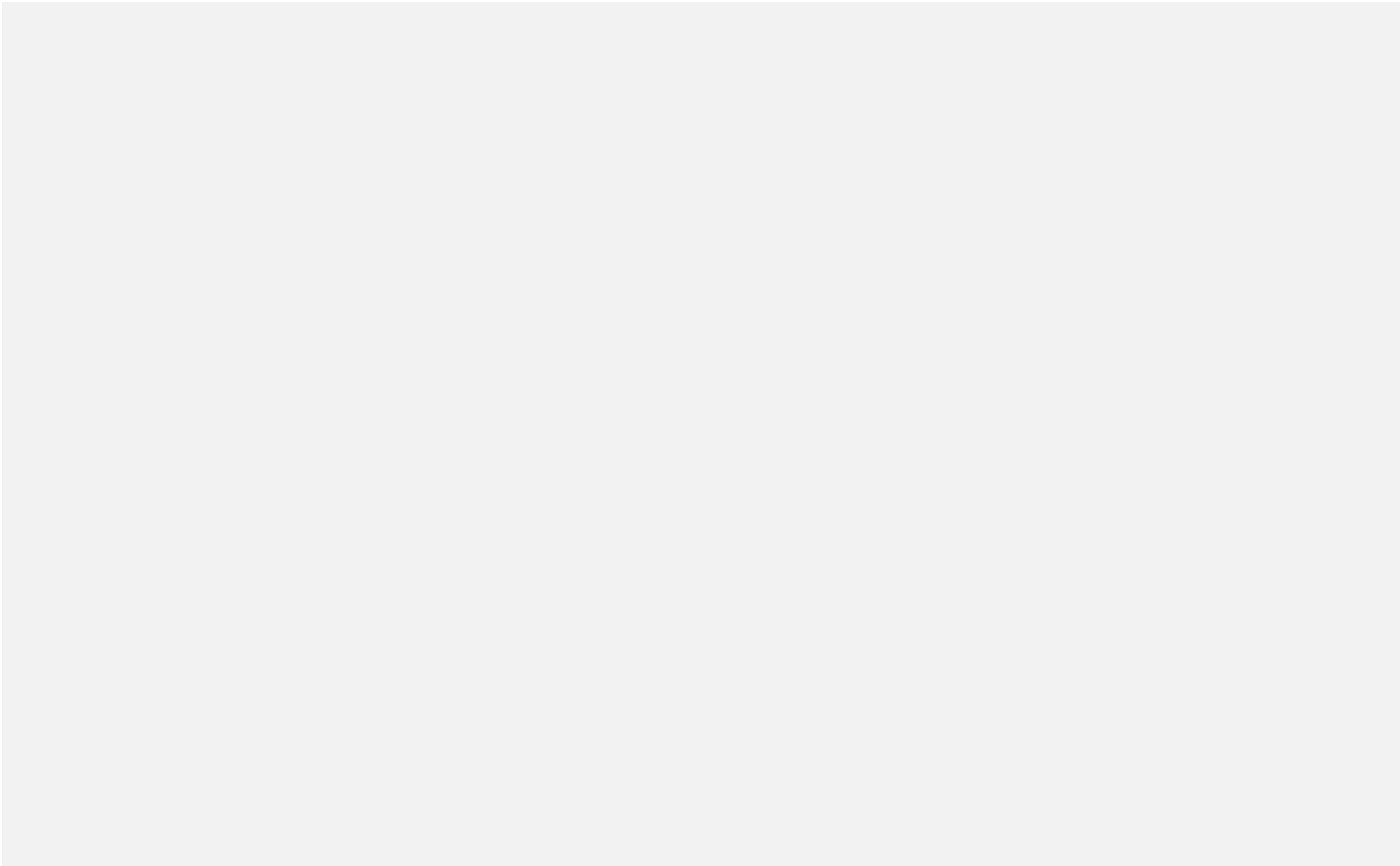


Chrome



Safari

CONTINUE



Since August 2018, Planned Parenthood has used a shell company to construct the facility, leaving no public trace that the former medical office would become one of the largest abortion clinics in the country. CBS News first visited the site in August, while it was still being built.

Colleen McNicholas, the chief medical officer of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri, said the facility was built in secret to avoid protestors and delays. Other Planned Parenthood projects had run into problems once the public realized the construction was for an abortion provider. In one instance, a communications company had refused to install telephone and data lines; in another, a cabinet maker never delivered an order, McNicholas said. In Birmingham, Alabama, protestors targeted Planned Parenthood's suppliers, flooding their social media accounts with fake negative reviews.

Trending News

Man severely burned after falling into hot spring near Old Faithful

Judge temporarily blocks Georgia's six-week abortion ban

Man jumps to his death at Grand Canyon Skywalk

Boy has photoshoot with beloved baby doll

"We were really intentional and thoughtful about making sure that we were able to complete this project as expeditiously as possible because we saw the writing on the wall — patients need better

access, so we wanted to get it open as quickly as we could," McNicholas said during an interview with CBS News.



Colleen McNicholas, left, speaks with CBS News' Kate Smith.

CBS NEWS

Planned Parenthood expects the facility to begin taking patients later this month. In the meantime, the organization's St. Louis location said it planned to double its clinic escort staff on Wednesday in anticipation of increased protests.

With a newly conservative Supreme Court, access to abortion has come under fire across the South and Midwest, where state lawmakers have raced to pass laws that ban the procedure in hopes of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court case that effectively legalized the procedure.

So far this year, state politicians have introduced 300 bills restricting access to abortion, according to data compiled by the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive health research organization. Twelve states have passed abortion bans, none of which are currently in effect.

But nowhere is access to abortion less secure than Missouri.

Since 2018, a lone Planned Parenthood has been the state's only legal abortion clinic, pushing some women to spend hours crossing the state to obtain the procedure. In May, that clinic was nearly forced to stop providing abortions when the state's health department refused to renew its license, a story first reported by CBS News. For months, a string of preliminary injunctions has allowed the clinic to continue operating.

Besides having just one clinic in their state, Missouri women face some of the country's most restrictive laws when seeking an abortion. Prior to receiving an abortion, patients are required to undergo state-mandated counseling where they receive anti-abortion literature. After that, they're forced to wait at least 72 hours before they can have their abortion.

In Illinois, lawmakers have gone in the other direction, expanding abortion access and loosening restrictions. Earlier this year, lawmakers in Springfield passed the "Reproductive Health Act," legislation that establishes access to abortion as a fundamental right.

Women from across the Midwest seeking abortions have flocked to Illinois, turning it into what Mary Kate Knorr, the executive director of Illinois Right to Life, an anti-abortion access group, calls "the abortion capital of the Midwest."

"It's a travesty that this is happening," Knorr said in an interview with CBS News. "It's a travesty that women come here to get an abortion."

Since 2017, the number of women crossing the border into Illinois for an abortion has doubled, according to data compiled by the Associated Press.

Providers near the border have seen those increases firsthand. At The Hope Clinic, a Granite City, Illinois-based abortion provider about 10-miles away from St. Louis, about 55% of patients seeking abortions are from Missouri, according to the clinic's deputy director Alison Dreith. On a recent day at Planned Parenthood's existing facility in Belleville, Illinois, just two miles from Planned Parenthood's new facility, every patient was from Missouri, something that Jessica Herbert, a provider at the clinic, said is typical.

"It's because they can't access basic healthcare in Missouri," Herbert said in an interview with CBS News. "There is a lot of hoops they have to jump through. It's fiscally easier for them to come here."

A tiny clinic nestled in the corner of a small strip mall, Herbert's office has seen a 300% increase in patients since 2016, an influx the facility isn't built to handle. Herbert says the office is at "max capacity," and patients seeking an appointment can wait up to six weeks to be seen. For some, that wait time can push women outside the legal timeline for certain abortion methods.

The small Planned Parenthood used to provide services beyond just abortion, like birth control and cancer screenings. But in 2018, Missouri's abortion clinics stopped offering medication abortion — commonly known as a pill abortion — and referred patients seeking that method to the Belleville location. After that, the Illinois Planned Parenthood became flooded with abortion patients from Missouri.

"We try to balance our schedule as best as we can but we are only a couple of people," Herbert said. "We are kind of a Cracker Jack box health center. You don't walk next to someone without brushing their shoulder, so absolutely we stretch our limits to the very best we can, but there's only so much we can do and at the end of the day."

The influx left little room for those seeking services outside of abortion care, Herbert said. With the opening of the mega-clinic nearby, they'll be able to expand those services, said McNicholas, who added that Planned Parenthood was expanding its staffing in the region to handle both family planning and abortion services. The new facility will roughly double the existing clinic's capacity, with the ability to serve up to 11,000 patients a year, said a spokesperson for Planned Parenthood.

Even though the new facility could absorb all of St. Louis's patients if the clinic has to stop performing abortions, McNicholas said the new clinic doesn't mean they're giving up on Missouri.

"Our supporters, our patients, the board, everyone is so committed to the mission of being present in Missouri and taking the responsibility to provide access to abortion for Missourians in the place they live," she said. "Although I am confident it will be a fight, we will continue to show up to that fight."



The facility was built in secret to avoid delays to what will be one of the largest abortion clinics in the country.
CBS NEWS

First published on October 2, 2019 / 7:02 AM
© 2019 CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Forbes is raving about “The Warby Parker of Hearing Aids” – Lively Changes Everything
LISTENLIVELY.COM PAID

Kansas Drivers With No Tickets in 3 Years Should Do This On Wednesday
EVERQUOTE INSURANCE QUOTES PAID





How To: Boost Prostate Health (Do This Daily)

PROSTAGENIX

PAID

What happens to all 2019 unsold cars and SUVs?

AGEFUL

PAID



Forbes is raving about “The Warby Parker of Hearing Aids” – Lively Changes Everything

LISTENLIVELY.COM

PAID

Kansas Drivers With No Tickets in 3 Years Should Do This On Wednesday

EVERQUOTE INSURANCE QUOTES

PAID

What happens to all 2019 unsold cars and SUVs?

AGEFUL

PAID

Play this for 1 minute and see why everyone is addicted

VIKINGS: FREE ONLINE GAME

PAID

Finally! A Natural Solution To Midnight Shoulder Pain

How Much Does House Cleaning Cost in Wichita?

[\$238 Patented Pillow]

MEDCLINE

PAID

THUMBTACK

PAID

Man jumps to his death in front of visitors at Grand Canyon Skywalk

Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex, sues U.K. tabloid over publishing private letter to estranged father

Defeat The War In Your Stomach - Top Yale Surgeon Explains How

GUNDRY MD | SUPPLEMENT

PAID

7 Cars So Good It's hard To Believe They Cost Under...

STUFF ANSWERED

PAID

Seniors Born Before 1965 With No Life Insurance Are Getting A Big Pay Day

NATIONAL FAMILY LIFE INSURANCE QUOTES

PAID

6 Ways To Save Money on a Medicare Supplement Plan. Do you Qualify?

MEDICAREPLAN.COM

PAID

"Lyft charged me \$12.81 to be kidnapped across state lines, gang raped and trafficked," woman alleges

Demi Moore: Man who raped me as teen said I was "whored" by my mother for \$500

Seniors With No Life Insurance Should Do This By September 30...

FINANCE DAILY

Luxury Senior Apartments in Wichita

SENIOR LIVING | SEARCH ADS

PAID

PAID

Kansas Senior Drivers Who Drive Less Than 55 Miles a Day Are Entitled for Extra Rate Decrease

INSURED NATION

Make the Internet Safe, Try a VPN for Free

ENCRYPT.ME

PAID

PAID

World [More](#)

Banksy opens pop-up "store" in feud with greeting card company

Australia "unlikely" to share internal communications linked to Mueller probe

New twist in case of U.S. man charged with killing resort worker

Pompeo confirms he was on Ukraine call amid impeachment inquiry - live updates

Hong Kong protester who was shot by police charged with assault



U.S.

More

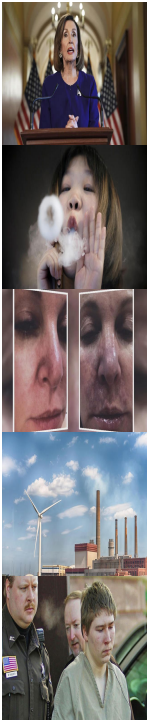
Pelosi and Schiff address reporters in news conference - live stream

Los Angeles County bans flavored tobacco products

Botox bars raise concern among medical experts: "Things can happen"

Massachusetts leads the nation in shifting to clean energy

"Making a Murderer" subject filing for clemency after 12 years in prison



Politics

More

Pelosi and Schiff address reporters in news conference - live stream

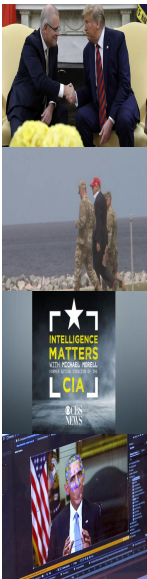
Australia "unlikely" to share internal communications linked to Mueller probe



Trump suggested shooting migrants in the legs, new book claims

William McRaven talks with Michael Morell on "Intelligence Matters"

Senators pressure social media giants to crack down on "deepfakes"



Entertainment More

Gigi Hadid stops comedian crashing Chanel runway

Lil Nas X on returning to his hometown
07:05

Lil Nas X on the origins of "Old Town Road": "The line just comes to me"

Lil Nas X on his journey to "Old Town Road"
04:32

The Rock to return to WWE's "Friday Night Smackdown"



Technology More

Ransomware's toll: Delayed surgeries and school closures

Colleges are starting degrees in esports, with \$36,000 programs

WeWork withdraws plan to go public following CEO turmoil



Elon Musk shows off next-generation "Starship" prototype

Facebook experiments with hiding "like" counts



Science More

Nature up close: Sandhill cranes vs. a black bear

1 whale found dead, 3 others euthanized on South Carolina beach

Elon Musk shows off next-generation "Starship" prototype

NASA captures black hole swallowing star the size of our sun

Tea bags may release microplastics into your cup of tea



Health More

Botox bars raise concern among medical experts: "Things can happen"

Planned Parenthood has been building a secret abortion "mega-clinic"

Johnson & Johnson settles landmark opioid case for \$20.4 million

Even with insurance, woman hit with \$40,000 in medical bills



Experts question studies on impact of red meat



MoneyWatch More

Los Angeles County bans flavored tobacco products



Pennsylvania working on "Fair Pay to Play Act" for college athletes



Alberto Salazar updated Nike CEO on trials with banned drugs



Manufacturers mired in deepest slump since Great Recession



Juul withdraws support for pro-vaping ballot measure



Crime More

"Making a Murderer" subject filing for clemency after 12 years in prison



"Making a Murderer" subject seeks clemency

06:25



Twist in Anguilla resort worker death

01:51



Former Dallas cop found guilty of murder

02:59



Missouri executes man for violent crime spree in 1996



Space More

Musk unveils SpaceX's "Starship" prototype
05:33

Musk debuts "Starship" spacecraft
02:36

Elon Musk shows off next-generation "Starship" prototype

NASA captures black hole swallowing star the size of our sun

Soyuz rocket launches crew with UAE guest cosmonaut



Latest Galleries More

World's most eerie abandoned hospitals
51 PHOTOS

50 most expensive colleges in America, ranked
50 PHOTOS

on Netflix, Hulu and Amazon
41 PHOTOS

ny Awards 2019: The hottest red carpet arrivals
72 PHOTOS

es from Riot Fest music festival
50 PHOTOS



Popular [More](#)

Why: Youngest kids in class struggle most
04:38

What to know before you hit a Botox bar
05:42

Drinking culture & American kids
23:34

Thinking a Murderer" subject seeks clemency
06:25

Woman cancels wedding over costly ER bill
05:33



Copyright © 2019 CBS Interactive Inc. All rights reserved.

- Privacy Policy
- Ad Choice
- Terms of Use
- Mobile User Agreement
- About
- Advertise
- Closed Captioning
- CBS News Store
- Site Map
- Contact Us
- Help

