



FLORIDA POLITICS

Florida health care agency to Planned Parenthood: We're still investigating abortions

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By [Michael Auslen](#)

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TALLAHASSEE — State health officials say they aren't backing down from their investigations of abortions at three Planned Parenthood clinics despite instructions from the Agency for Health Care Administration that the procedures in question could resume.

In a letter Wednesday, AHCA general counsel Stuart Williams wrote that the agency still believes Planned Parenthood clinics in St. Petersburg, Fort Myers and Naples performed second-trimester abortions for which they were not licensed.

"Your client, Planned Parenthood, continues to misrepresent to the media that AHCA has changed its position, and Planned Parenthood clinics in Florida may now provide unauthorized second-trimester abortions. This is false," the letter says.

It came just hours after a letter surfaced in news reports that Williams sent

Tuesday. The earlier letter says the AHCA stands by a rule passed by the agency in 2006 defining the first trimester of pregnancy as the first 14 weeks after a pregnant woman's last menstrual period, or 12 weeks after fertilization.

A spokeswoman for the AHCA had no immediate comment about the discrepancy between the letters.

On Aug. 5, the AHCA cited Planned Parenthood clinics for performing abortions in the 13th week of pregnancy at locations licensed for first-trimester abortions only. Planned Parenthood officials say that doctors measure a pregnancy's length from the woman's last menstrual cycle, and so an abortion performed in the 13th week falls within the state's regulations for the first trimester of pregnancy.

The first letter said Planned Parenthood can resume abortions up to the 14th week at the St. Petersburg, Fort Myers and Naples clinics, the three in the state licensed for first-trimester abortions only. This prompted Planned Parenthood to say it would stop pursuing an emergency injunction from a judge.

"This concession by AHCA has removed the immediate necessity for an injunction, and we will not pursue one at this time," Barbara Zdravecky, CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida, said in a written statement.

With the arrival of the second letter, however, the next steps become murkier. Planned Parenthood doesn't plan to continue seeking an injunction, but attorneys haven't ruled out the possibility of legal action over the AHCA's allegations of license violations in the future.

The AHCA asserts that Planned Parenthood self-reported illegal abortions at the three clinics.

Planned Parenthood attorney Julie Gallagher contends that isn't true.

"We absolutely did not report any illegal procedures," she said in a written statement. "AHCA has changed its position on what procedures are included in the first trimester as evidenced by their own documents."

Planned Parenthood clinics frequently report information about the abortions they perform to the state, including the length of the pregnancy, and court filings by the organization say the AHCA has never raised questions about them.

The violations at the three clinics resulted from inspections Gov. Rick Scott ordered last month of all 16 Planned Parenthood locations in Florida. Scott's order came in response to viral videos that appear to show Planned Parenthood employees discussing fetal organ donation, which is illegal in this state and was not found at any of the clinics.

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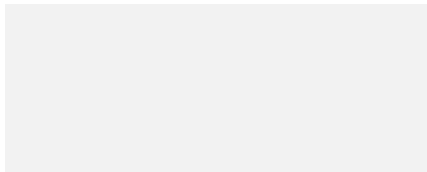
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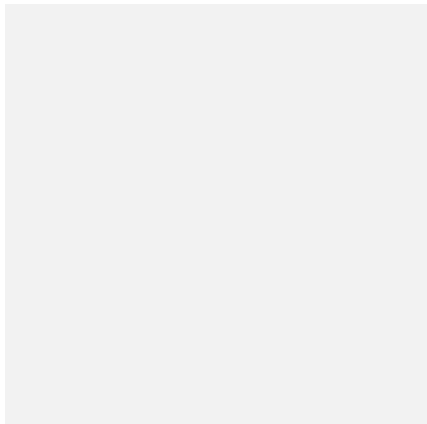
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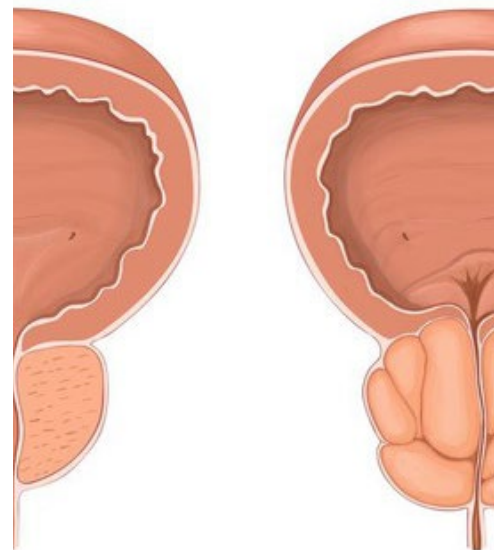
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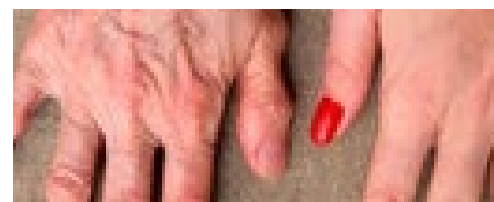
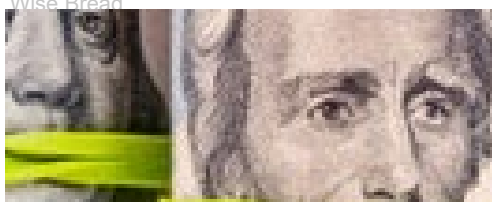
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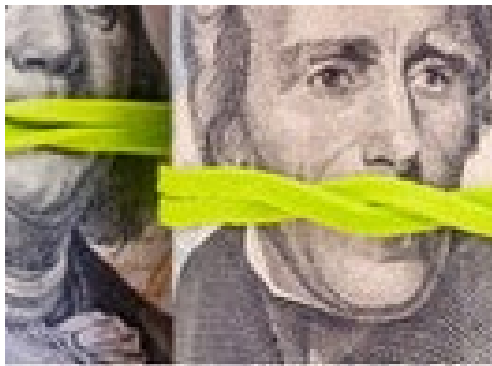
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