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State threatens to close abortion clinics

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SEP 10, 2015



Gov. Nikki Haley

COLUMBIA — The state health department suspended the licenses of two of the state's three abortion clinics Friday, threatening to close them over recordkeeping lapses and improper disposal that Gov. Nikki Haley referred to as “callous treatment of human life.”

The Department of Health and Environmental Control suspended **Planned Parenthood of South Atlantic** in Columbia and **Greenville Women's Clinic in Greenville**, for a series of violations of state law.

The violations cited at both places include incomplete records, performing an abortion sooner than 60 minutes after an ultrasound and not properly disposing of aborted fetuses. According to manifests, the fetuses were sterilized with steam and taken to a landfill, rather than incinerated or buried as required by law.

The Columbia clinic was cited for 21 violations and the Greenville clinic for six. Planned Parenthood's additional citations include having expired medicine and storing sterile and nonsterile gloves together. The orders require Planned Parenthood to pay a \$7,500 penalty and the Greenville Women's Clinic to pay \$2,750.

Both facilities have until Sept. 28 to come into compliance or they will be shut down. The Charleston Women's Medical Clinic in West Ashley had **four minor violations** that were documentation errors.

DHEC's findings were turned over to the State Law Enforcement Division and the

state attorney general for possible criminal prosecution.

The review of the state's three abortion clinics came after Haley instructed DHEC's chief Catherine Heigel on Aug. 18 to review the policies and the practices of the state's abortion clinics, while making those owned by or affiliated with Planned Parenthood a priority.

Haley is among several Republicans who demanded reviews of Planned Parenthood clinics after edited videos secretly recorded by anti-abortion activists became public that showed Planned Parenthood officials matter-of-factly describing how they sometimes provide fetal tissue to medical researchers.

Most recently, a legislative panel voted to investigate the state agencies that have dealings with Planned Parenthood because Rep. Donna Hicks, R-Boiling Springs, argued some like DHEC had not been regulating the state's abortion clinics properly.

Planned Parenthood and other medical facilities in South Carolina, including MUSC, have said fetal tissue is not used for research in South Carolina.

Jenny Black, CEO of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, said DHEC's action "shocked" the organization because the agency's inspectors gave no indication that they had found violations that called for "extreme action."

"We are deeply concerned that this investigation is politically motivated and that this political interference could prevent some women from getting high-quality