



NEWS

Sale of Wis. clinic means end to abortion services

Paul Srubas The Green Bay (Wis.) Press Gazette

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Story Highlights

Ob/Gyn Associates%2C the only medical facility performing abortions in Green Bay area%2C was sold to Bellin Health System

The clinic has been the site of nearly daily picketing by anti-abortion protesters

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin has filed a federal lawsuit attempting to block provisions in the state%27s newly approved law

GREEN BAY, Wis. -- Beginning Aug. 1, abortions will no longer be performed in Green Bay after the new owner of a clinic has opted not to perform the procedure, federal court documents say.

Ob/Gyn Associates, the only medical facility performing abortions in the Green Bay area, has been sold to Bellin Health System, which will discontinue performing the medical procedures when it takes over the clinic Aug. 1, according to Dr. Robert DeMott, Ob/Gyn's owner.

STORY:Anti-abortion measures may hit women's health care

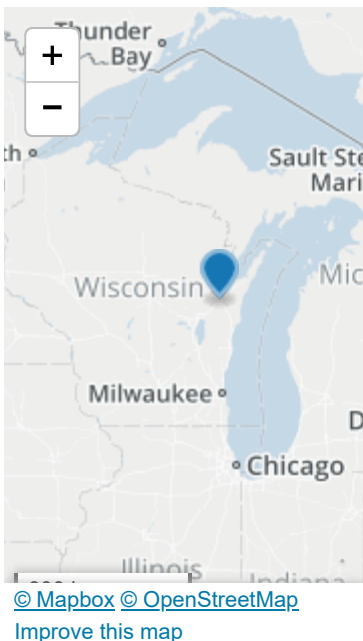
The clinic, located next door to Bellin, has been the site of nearly daily picketing by anti-abortion protesters.

DeMott's statement is part of the record in Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's federal lawsuit attempting to block provisions in the newly approved law requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges to nearby hospitals.

In Planned Parenthood's suit, filed in the Western District of U.S. Court in Madison, the organization identifies five clinics throughout the state, three of which Planned Parenthood operates, that perform abortions. One of those five is Ob-Gyn in Green Bay.

Provisions in the abortion law require physicians who perform abortions to have admitting privileges for their clients at a hospital within 30 miles of their clinic. That means the closures of a private clinic in Milwaukee and Planned Parenthood's Appleton clinic, according to the suit. Ob/Gyn's ceasing of abortions, although unrelated to the new budget provisions, will mean only two abortion clinics will remain in operation in the state, according to the suit. One is in Madison; the other, in Milwaukee, would operate on a reduced schedule.

The two clinics would be unable to meet demand, causing scheduling delays for patients, some of whom potentially would be making multiple 200-mile or longer roundtrip visits, the suit says. The delays could "deprive women of their constitutionally protected right to obtain a pre-viability abortion," the suit says.



Hospitals typically grant admitting privileges only to physicians who can guarantee at least a minimum number of hospital admissions each year, but because abortion is such a safe procedure, physicians who perform the service can't meet those numbers, the suit says. Also, hospitals that don't perform abortions may be reluctant to grant admitting privileges to physicians who do, the suit says.

In DeMott's statement of record, he says he was the only physician in Green Bay providing the service, that he becomes an employee of Bellin as of Aug. 1 and, as a condition of employment, won't be allowed to provide abortion services.

"Consequently, as of August 1, 2013, no physician in Green Bay will be providing abortion services to any patients," he said in the statement.

DeMott could not be reached this morning for comment.

Bellin issued the following written statement Wednesday: "In accordance with Bellin Health policy, we cannot verify or provide comments on potential or existing business negotiations."

The suit, which includes several plaintiffs who are physicians with Planned Parenthood or other clinics where abortions are performed, claims the act violates their right to equal protection under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The suit names Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne (as a representative of all prosecutors in the state) and members of the state's

Medical Examining Board, who would be called upon to sanction physicians violating the act.

The law was to have gone into effect July 8 but is on temporary hold pending results of the suit. Written arguments are scheduled to be filed throughout August and a trial is set for Nov. 25.