

Nurses, other non-physicians can perform abortions in California

By Holly Yan, CNN

Updated 3:21 AM ET, Thu October 10, 2013



California's new law means more people will be allowed to performed abortions.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

In California, some nurses and physicians' assistants can perform abortions

They must complete specified training

California's move bucks a national trend of tightening abortion laws

As more states pass measures tightening abortion laws, California is making abortions more accessible.

Nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives and physicians' assistants who complete specified training are now able to perform abortions in California. Gov. Jerry Brown signed the measure into law Wednesday.

"Governor Brown is making a commitment to Californians to continue working to make abortion services a human right and not a privilege in our state, and is also sending a strong message to the rest of the country that attacks on women's health and rights stop in California," Laura Jimenez, executive director of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, said in a statement.

"We are proud that California is the only state in the nation right now that is passing proactive legislation to improve access to abortion, and we hope that this law can further efforts to expand access to women throughout the country."

California Assembly member Toni Atkins, who authored the bill, said the new law reduces obstacles for California women seeking abortions.

"Increasing the number of trained healthcare providers who can perform abortions on a timely basis without requiring significant travel will improve the lives of women and their families in many ways," Atkins said in a statement.



This bill is not about helping women, it is specifically designed to trivialize what an abortion is, and its risks, said Anissa Smith, spokeswoman for the California ProLife Council. "Reducing the medical standards for abortion ... defies logic for those who say they care about women."

The Most Rev. Gerald Wilkerson, president of the California Catholic Conference, said even though California makes up 12% of the nation's population, it's also where 29% of abortions take place.

"The often repeated mantra of those supporting abortions rights is that abortions ought to be safe, legal and rare," Wilkerson said. "With this change in California's law, abortions are merely legal -- no longer safe and rare."

Brown also signed six other health-related bills Wednesday, including one that repeals parts of the California Building Standards Code that treat primary clinics differently depending on whether the clinics provide abortion services.

Against the grain

California's decision bucks a trend of stiffer abortion laws across the country.

Texas passed a new law this year that bans abortions after 20 weeks of gestation; requires abortion clinics to upgrade facilities to become ambulatory surgical centers; tightens usage guidelines for the RU486, the so-called "abortion pill"; and requires doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of their clinics.

Planned Parenthood filed a federal lawsuit last month seeking to overturn parts of the new Texas law -- specifically, the parts about doctors needing hospital admitting privileges, usage controls on RU486 and the upgrades to clinics.

In July, North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory signed a law requiring all abortion clinics be held to the same standards as outpatient surgical centers.

Also in July, a North Dakota judge delayed the implementation of a new state law that threatened to shut down the state's only abortion clinic by requiring doctors performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles.

The North Dakota law also requires those physicians to have "staff privileges to replace hospital on-staff physicians at that hospital."

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