

Editorial: Stop underhanded attempts to obstruct abortion access

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Several states have enacted laws in recent years that require doctors who perform abortions at clinics to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. These laws, masquerading as measures to protect the health of women, are nothing more than underhanded attempts to obstruct access to abortion services. In every state where such a law has been passed, it would result in the closure of at least some abortion clinics, making it substantially more difficult for women to get the reproductive healthcare to which they are constitutionally entitled.

A federal appeals court panel late last month blocked Mississippi's version of the law from going into effect, noting that it would close the only abortion clinic in the state, in violation of the Constitution. The doctors at the clinic had tried and failed to get admitting privileges at the seven hospitals in the area; at five of the seven they were denied because the hospitals refuse privileges to any doctor who performs abortions, presumably to avoid controversy or for religious reasons.

lRelated Will a federal judge strike down a restrictive Alabama abortion law?

This week, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled that an Alabama law requiring admitting privileges was unconstitutional and would force three of the state's five abortion clinics to close. If this law doesn't create an undue burden on women, Thompson wrote, then "no regulation, short of

those imposing an outright prohibition on abortion, would.” A similar law in Wisconsin – which has not gone into effect pending a court decision – would close the busiest of the state’s four clinics, overburdening the remaining three, which already have waiting lists. In Texas, a federal appeals court ruling upholding the admitting privileges requirement has shut about half the abortion clinics in the state, according to a team of researchers based at the University of Texas; more than 1 million women of childbearing age now live more than 100 miles from the nearest abortion clinic.

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