

The Clinic Protection Act

SB 320 by Senator Linda Stewart

HB 189 by Representative Amy Mercado

Why do abortion clinic protections exist?

During the 1980's and early 1990's, abortion protests and blockades were on the rise. Violence against abortion providers was escalating across the country, culminating in the murder of Dr. Gunn in 1993 outside a Pensacola, FL clinic and the attempted murder of Dr. Tiller in the same year outside his Wichita, Kansas

abortion clinic. These incidents created urgency in Congress to pass new federal legislation to address the violence committed against reproductive health care facilities and providers and the denial of access to women seeking their services.

Why does Florida need the Clinic Protection Act?

The Federal FACE (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances) Act was enacted in 1994, makes it a federal crime to use force, the threat of force, or physical obstruction to injure, intimidate, or interfere with, somebody who provides or is obtaining reproductive health care services. More than ten states have enhanced, state-level FACE Acts or similar legislation like the Clinic Protection Act. Although these state laws generally prohibit the same activities as the federal version, with some variation, they can help ensure that state and local authorities have more opportunities for enforcement. They can also define key terms in a way that helps local law enforcement protect health clinics.

Abortion providers, patients, and facilities are frequently the targets of violence and harassment, ranging from vandalism to deadly attacks. While this violence has been a problem for many years, in the last year, reports of threats and incidents of violence against reproductive healthcare providers and facilities have skyrocketed. According to the National

Abortion Federation (NAF), the number of reported threats of direct harm to reproductive healthcare providers increased radically from one in 2014 to 94 in 2015. The number of incidents of violence has also gone up, with devastating effects. In November 2015, three people were murdered and nine injured when Robert Dear opened fire with an assault rifle at a Planned Parenthood health center in Colorado Springs.

Anti-abortion extremists are increasingly using the internet and social media to incite others to violence, often referring to specific abortion providers by name and publishing their home addresses. NAF reported more than 25,000 incidents of online hate speech in just six weeks beginning in November 2015, and estimated that the number would have been over 100,000 if tracking had begun earlier in the year. At the same time, reports of vandalism against reproductive healthcare facilities and the number of hoax devices or suspicious packages found in or around facilities have increased.

Who does the Clinic Protection Act protect?

- A facility or anybody who works at a facility that provides reproductive health services
- Patients of facilities that provide reproductive health
- People accompanying patients, such as a parent, partner, or clinic escort