



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 19, 2011

Virginia Approves Tough New Abortion Clinic Health Standards

The Virginia Board of Health has approved tough new regulations governing the operation of abortuaries in the Old Dominion. The regulations now permit the state to closely monitor these businesses to ensure that women who seek to end the lives of their unborn children do so in a safe, sterile environment.



Abortionists and their political backers, as well as the abortion industry, opposed the regulations, but could do little to stop them. Gov. [Bob McDonnell](#), a moderate conservative, appointed nine of the health board's 14 members.

The new rules, [approved 12-1](#), now go to conservative Attorney General [Ken Cuccinelli](#) (left) for review. He and the Governor will likely approve them.

SB 924, the Rules

The new authority to monitor the abortion business arose from [Senate Bill 924](#), which mandated that state health regulations treat abortuaries in a manner similar to hospitals. The bill's language is clear: Abortion clinics must meet the same standards as other certified health facilities that routinely deal with infection and serious medical procedures:

[M]inimum standards for construction, maintenance, operation, staffing, equipping, staff qualifications and training, and conditions under which services may be provided, as well as requirements for policies related to infection prevention, disaster preparedness, and facility security for hospitals, nursing homes, and certified nursing facilities shall also apply to any facility in which five or more first trimester abortions per month are performed, and that such facilities ... shall be classified as a category of hospital for the purposes of such requirements.

SB 924 designated the regulations an "emergency," and imposed a 280-day deadline upon the health board to write them.

Among the codicils in the new rules are those [closely regulating](#) the size, condition, and physical plant of the abortion centers. For instance, "each facility shall have a governing body" and "shall develop, implement and maintain a policies and procedures manual. Policies and procedures shall be based on recognized standards and guidelines."

Each facility shall have an administrator, and a staff that is adequately trained and capable of providing appropriate service and supervision to patients.

Abortions shall be performed by physicians who are licensed to practice medicine in Virginia and who are qualified by training and experience to perform abortion procedures. ...



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A physician must remain on the premises until all patients are medically stable, must sign the discharge order and be available and accessible until the last patient is discharged.

Licensed health care practitioners trained in post-procedure assessment must remain on the premises until the last patient has been discharged.

In addition, the [rules say](#), the patient must provide “informed written consent” before procuring an abortion. Beyond that are rules governing infection control, the disposal of fetal remains, abortion and family planning counseling, and the physical plant of the facility.

“The facility shall have an infection prevention plan that encompasses the entire facility and all services provided,” [SB 924 says](#), and “[p]rior to the initiation of any procedure, a medical history and physical examination, to include confirmation of pregnancy, shall be completed for each patient.”

Each abortion facility in Virginia, even those operating at separate locations but that are part of the same business, must now have a license, and state inspectors are required to make unannounced inspections. Abortuaries [must obtain](#) the written consent of unemancipated minors and their parents before killing the unborn child.

Reaction

Unsurprisingly, the abortion industry and its feminist allies are unhappy. [The Washington Post described](#) the scene when the health board voted, noting that the board chairman repeatedly warned the crowd that police would remove those who disrupted the meeting, which lasted four and a half hours. [The Washington Times reported](#) that 32 people voiced opinions to the health board, with opponents outnumbering supporters 2 to 1.

A survey by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute [showed that](#) Virginians, by an “overwhelming” margin of 55 to 22 percent, favored the tight restrictions.

Regardless, opponents were steadfast. [Tarina Keene](#), executive director of [NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia](#), [told the Post](#), “We are here today not because of a concern over women’s health. We are here today because of a political battle that has raged in this state for decades.” The paper noted that Keene “teared up after the vote.”

At the group’s website, [she wrote](#), “Our worst fears have been validated today as the Board of Health voted to approve politically motivated rules that fail fully to protect women’s health and safety.”

After the vote, a man who apparently supports abortion erupted, the *Post* reported: “You government dogs! You should know better.”

According to the *Post*, a delegate in Virginia’s General Assembly, [Charnielle Herring](#), said the “heavy hand of government” was at work attempting to control “choice.” As well, the [Washington Times noted](#), Herring unholstered abortion proponents’ ultimate weapon in any debate that ends with minor restrictions on abortions — a lawsuit: “I suspect that there will be a court challenge, and this could have been avoided if this wasn’t an emergency procedure and this was a careful, drawn-out process,” she said.

“No shred of data ... supports that this procedure is unsafe,” a former health official told the board, the [Times reported](#). He called the regulations a “sinister campaign.”

Pro-lifers noted that he did not put a label on the campaign to continue taking the lives of the unborn.



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