

Planned Parenthood grills inspector general in day 2 Louisville abortion clinic trial

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By Lawrence Smith

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- Outside the federal courthouse in downtown Louisville on Thursday, a pro-choice group holding a brief, silent protest.

Inside, attorneys for The EMW Women's clinic and Planned Parenthood spent most of this the second day of trial grilling Inspector General Robert Silverthorn, the man responsible for approving abortion clinic licenses.



The EMW Women's Clinic and Planned Parenthood filed suit against Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin's administration after the state claimed the clinic failed to meet state health regulations. EMW claims it operated with no problem for 36 years until pro-life Gov. Matt Bevin took office.

"They're about shutting down abortion facilities," said Brigitte Amiri, an ACLU attorney for EMW. "It's about picking off abortion clinics one-by-one

in this state and basically doing what Gov. Bevin has said he wants to do, which is make abortion illegal in Kentucky.”

But Bevin's attorney Steve Pitt said the real problem is that past administrations were lackadaisical in enforcing regulations that required abortion clinics to have transfer agreements with hospitals and ambulance services.

"You may remember that Planned Parenthood reported that it had done 23 abortions without a license," Pitt said. "That caused the cabinet then to start looking these transport agreements.”

But Planned Parenthood and EMW claim the state keeps changing the rules, making it impossible for abortion clinics to comply.

"Both in terms of Gov. Bevin himself and also people within his cabinet, really singling out abortion facilities for disparate treatment and going after them in a very stringent way, unlike any other health facility," Amiri said. But Pitt said the administration said any changes are meant to clarify the rules not confuse them and that EMW has been given every opportunity to comply.

"There is absolutely no political or religious connotation here," Pitt said. "This is question of women's safety and health.”

The trial is expected to last through Friday. It could take months for the judge to issue a ruling.