Other states expect
La. abortion business

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LITTLE ROCK — Abortion clinics in states neighboring Louisiana expect to see an increase in business if Louisiana's strict, new anti-abortion law goes into effect.

“Clinics in Louisiana will tend to say ‘go to Arkansas or Texas, because that’s where we know you won’t get as much hassle,’” said Kimberly Collins, director of Little Rock Family Planning Services, a clinic that performs abortions.

Louisiana women also would head east to Mississippi for abortions, a Mississippi abortion clinic administrator said.

The Louisiana Legislature Tuesday overrode Gov. Buddy Roemer's veto of a bill that would ban abortions except to save the mother's life, or in cases of rape or incest. Louisiana doctors who perform an illegal abortion could get up to 10 years in prison and a $100,000 fine.

The law would take effect 60 days after the close of the legislative session, which must end by July 1. On Wednesday, a federal judge scheduled a July 13 hearing on a constitutional challenge to the bill.

Arkansas alone could experience a 25 percent increase in the number of abortions performed annually, Collins said Thursday. About 6,000 to 7,000 abortions are performed annually in Arkansas, she said. She estimated that as many as 2,000 Louisiana women could travel to one of six abortion clinics in Arkansas if the Louisiana law stands.

Collins estimated that 16,000 to 17,000 abortions are performed in Louisiana annually.

The American Civil Liberties Union and abortion-rights groups are seeking an injunction to keep the Louisiana law from taking effect during the appeals process.

“If the injunction for some reason doesn’t go through, we’ll see an increase in business. After all, we’re 3½ hours from Shreveport,” said Deanna Jackson, director clinic operations for two women's clinics in Dallas that conduct abortions.

A spokesperson for a Texas-based anti-abortion organization disagreed.

“We don’t see that happening,” said Lisa Salcido, spokeswoman for the Austin-based Texas Right to Life Committee. “More Louisiana women will be choosing life for their babies than crossing state lines to allow their children to be destroyed by the abortionists.”

Texas has no state-imposed restrictions on abortion, Jackson said Wednesday.

Arkansas’ parental consent law requires a girl under 17 seeking an abortion to get the permission of a parent or guardian, or a judge must waive the consent requirement. The state constitution bans the use of public money for abortions except to save the life of the mother.

The Mississippi legislature this year approved a bill requiring a 24-hour waiting period before a woman could obtain an abortion.

Nancy Rogers is the administrator of one of the clinics challenging the Mississippi bill. More abortions will be performed in her Jackson, Miss., clinic if the Louisiana law stands, Rogers said.