Operation Rescue may come to BR

By PATRICK BONIN
Associate staff writer

Organizers of a seven-week anti-abortion demonstration in Wichita, Kan., have said they plan to target other cities throughout the country for similar protests, possibly including Baton Rouge.

Keith Tucci, executive director of Operation Rescue, recently told the Associated Press that Baton Rouge is one of five locations that the group is considering visiting later this fall.

Tucci did not return a message left at his Summerville, S.C., home Monday.

The possibility that the group will come to Baton Rouge did not surprise pro-choice or pro-life supporters.

"I don't believe, if it were to take place down here, that you would find a lot of resistance or opposition here like you did in Kansas. The people here would be a lot more supportive, a lot more receptive, I don't think you would find law officers beating people on the head with sticks or spraying them in the face with Mace," said Rep. Sam Theriot.

"We aren't surprised that they were thinking about" coming here, she said. "Louisiana's been pretty much in the forefront of anti-choice legislation. But we'll certainly be open no matter what they do."

State Rep. Sam Theriot, D-Abbeville, who authored an anti-abortion bill that was passed into law by the Legislature this summer, said he was not surprised that Operation Rescue was considering a visit to the state.

"I think they're just looking for fertile ground," Theriot said. "The support is here and the legislation is passed."

The law, which is currently tied up in the courts, outlawed most abortions but has exceptions for rape, incest and to save the mother's life. It also provides that doctors who perform illegal abortions could get up to 10 years in prison and face up to a $100,000 fine.

Gov. Buddy Roemer vetoed the bill, but the 1991 Legislature overrode the veto, marking the first time in modern Louisiana history that a gubernatorial veto had been overturned.

"There is an abundance of support here," Theriot said. "I don't believe, if it were to take place down here, that you would find a lot of resistance or opposition here like you did in Kansas. The people here would be a lot more supportive, a lot more receptive. I don't think you would find law officers beating people on the head with sticks or spraying them in the face with Mace."

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