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Panel can't clarify abortion policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — The official who wrote the guidelines for what can and can't be said about abortion in federally supported family planning clinics spent hours Monday trying to explain. The congressmen listening weren't satisfied.

"It's deceptive, it's a hoax and you're not playing straight with the women of this country," said Rep. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Dr. William R. Archer III, a deputy assistant health secretary, was peppered with sometimes hostile questions by Democrats who wanted to pin him down on whether people who work in family planning clinics that receive federal money can counsel women on abortion.

At issue was a regulation — dubbed a "gag rule" by opponents — that restricts what people in the clinics can say.

On March 20, the Department of Health and Human Services sent out guidelines that were supposed to explain how the rules governing this are to be applied. The guidance can be confusing.

In one paragraph, for example, it says a pregnant woman at one of these clinics can be sent for medical care elsewhere that may result in "the termination of her pregnancy." But in the next sentence, it says: "This referral seeks to provide a pregnant woman with the best medical management of her pregnancy and to en-

sure both her health and the health of her unborn child."

"I just think, Doctor, with one sentence, you could clear this up," Wyden said.

There was no one-sentence explanation. Archer said the administration was not trying to restrict what a doctor could tell a patient, leaving that up to the physician's medical judgment. But whatever was said, it had to be done in person and it had to be done by a doctor.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., chairman of the Energy and Commerce subcommittee on health that was holding a hearing on the matter, said that part in the rule alone is enough to choke off discussion of abortion in many of the clinics.

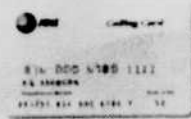
"In most family planning clinics there aren't doctors there, and you know there aren't doctors there," Waxman said.

The administration is trying to walk a fine line between its often stated opposition to abortion and the political storm from groups that see the counseling regulation as censorship and a restriction of a woman's constitutional rights.

While the doctor can advise a woman on the option of abortion, he can't tell her precisely where to get one, according to Archer. All doctors can do is tell them to call the clinics and ask.



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One dead, 2 wounded after gunfight

(AP) — One man was killed and two were wounded in a gunfight early Monday at a duplex in a suburban Eugene neighborhood near the Willamette River.

Lane County sheriff's deputies arriving on the scene shortly after 1:30 a.m. found two men lying in the yard, one dead and one wounded, and a third man barricaded inside. After nearly five hours of talking, police persuaded Robert Norman Shepard, 38, to surrender.

Police identified the dead man as Archie Willie Churchill, 40, of Eugene.

The second man in the yard was Michael Dean Brown, 45, of Pleasant Hill, police said. He was in critical condition at Sacred Heart General Hospital with bullet wounds to the chest and abdomen.

Shepard suffered a penetrating wound to the right knee. He was listed in serious condition at Sacred Heart, but was scheduled to be arraigned at the hospital Monday afternoon on charges of murder and attempted murder.

"It appears to have been a social occasion for five individuals inside the house," Sheriff Robert McManus said. "Then, Mr. Shepard showed up."

Police said the occupant of the duplex apartment, Kristi Lou Gibson, 24, was home when the shooting broke out, but she escaped without injury.

After the incident began, police evacuated a number of residents to a nearby bowling alley. Some neighbors said the duplex had been the site of numerous recent shouting matches and fights.



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