Abortion: New regulations require structural changes

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The law states that the health centers will be required to maintain structural standards that include a free-foot width for public hallways, larger janitorial closets and a minimum of four parking spaces for each surgical room in the facility.

Opposition claims the regulations are a way to restrict women's access to abortion.

"I think there's no doubt that the (regulations) are politically motivated, and they clearly put politics above women's health," Stewart-Real said.

Gans Turner, who has had an abortion, supports the actions of legislators.

"The Virginia Society of Human Life is very pleased with the actions of the legislature two years ago, making this proposal an effective law," said Gans Turner. "The fact that the General Assembly saw fit to provide this protection for women... under the law, I think is a positive move."

There have been additional arguments that the structural regulations in particular are not medically necessary.

"I'm disappointed that the Board of Health... did not listen to the medical experts who've made it very clear that these regulations are not medically necessary and will not improve women's health care," Stewart-Real said.

The chair of the Board of Health and representative for EMS, Bruce Edwards, thinks otherwise, due to his experience in EMS.

"I think that the whole purpose of this... is to ensure that the places are safe and they are clean," said Edwards. "From the standpoint of the structure, there needs to be adequate room in all these facilities so we can work on and take care of the patient."

According to Edwards, each of the 20 abortion clinics in Virginia were issued licenses with corrective notices for simple fixes like placement of hand wash basins and sanitation aspects, as well as for more complicated, structural issues.

While changes to health care facilities in accordance with these regulations will be made by summer 2014, only one facility has expressed that it will not be able to comply with new regulations.

Upon inspections by the state medical examiner, 12 of the 20 clinics are in the process of, or are already in compliance.

Virginia is not alone in creating these types of regulations. Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Arkansas and Pennsylvania have adopted similar laws.

The recent death of a woman during an abortion procedure has provoked Maryland legislators to take action as well.

"We will continue to organize our supporters to speak out against these regulations and hopefully get them overturned," Stewart-Real said.

Follow the writer on Twitter: @MelisaDraudt

Camels come to campus

The Hokie Bird enjoys an afternoon ride on a camel in front of the Graduate Life Center. The event was sponsored by Friends of Israel as a celebration of Israel's 65th anniversary.

photo by Ben Weidlich

Mural: Art reflects nature

from page one

"That deer (featured in the mural) showed up in my garden the week I was asked to join," Bento said. "It showed up at the same time, two days in a row.

The background of the mural came more naturally.

"The mountains (behind the deer) are how I see everything here, every street here... everything is so curvy," Bento said.

Bento says she hopes to be able to design more murals for the town in the future, and hopes that after this unveiling, the younger community of local student artists would become interested in contributing to more murals.

She said the incoming wave of undergraduate artists would hopefully get involved through the Blacksburg Regional Art Association (BRAA), Blacksburg's volunteer-based group of artistic and creative residents.

The project was started around December 2012 as a joint partnership between the Montgomery Regional Tourism Office, the Town of Blacksburg, the Blacksburg Partnership, 16 Blocks magazine, the BRAA and Blue Ridge Real Estate LLC.

Bento says she got involved when 16 Blocks magazine posted they were looking for an artist to take the project on, and when she showed interest, they were excited to take her on as the designer.

The LOVEworks social media campaign, run by the VTC, was started to share the message that "love is at the heart of every Virginia vacation." They encourage visitors and residents to take a picture with the mural and share it through social media.

Another LOVEworks site opened in Christiansburg earlier this month, and the cost of creating both sites will be reimbursed for up to $1,200 by the state tourism office.

Follow the writer on Twitter: @DeanSeal