



## That's the only gun violence that I'm aware of



*By Steve Benen*

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We're accustomed to certain arguments from opponents of abortion rights when they try to shut down women's clinics. **Irin Carmon reports**, however, reports on an unexpected twist in Kansas, where the right hopes to close the South Wind Women's Center.

Tuesday morning, abortion opponents went before the Wichita City Council seeking to shut down the South Wind Women's Center, a clinic that provides abortions. Among their complaints: The clinic draws gun violence.

This struck some, including the clinic's director, Julie Burkhart, as ironic. After all, South Wind opened in April in the same building that housed George Tiller's clinic. Before Tiller was murdered in church by an anti-abortion extremist in 2009, there was indeed documented gun violence in front of the clinic -- by Shelley Shannon, an abortion opponent who shot Tiller.

"That's the only gun violence that I'm aware of," Burkhart, who has been fielding attempts to shut down the clinic since before it even opened, told MSNBC. "We talk to law enforcement regularly and I've never had any complaints of gun violence."

The argument seems to have a circular quality, doesn't it? The women's clinic lead abortion opponents to bring guns... and gun violence is a problem... so close the clinic to make abortion opponents happy... or they'll be inclined to bring guns... and gun violence is a problem...

Carmon talked to Mark S. Gietzen, chairman of the Kansas Coalition for Life, who referenced other "gun incidents," which included clinic security staff removing guns from their holster -- without firing them -- on two separate instances.

So Carmon asked the next logical question: if gun violence is tied directly to protestors, wouldn't it make more sense to limit the protests rather than close the clinic? Gietzen didn't quite see it that way.

"The fact is that this is typical about what happens at the abortion clinic," he said. "Abortion clinics are going to bring that sort of clientele."

I suppose restrictions on firearms might also address the possibility of gun violence, though that's probably out of the question, too.

In an unsettling exchange, Gietzen also criticized a South Wind Women's Center escort -- people who ensure women can enter and exit the facility safely -- who the protestors accuse of picking fights.

And then he issued what sounded a lot like a threat. "Even a well-meaning dog will bite at some point in time if you keep antagonizing it," Gietzen said.

Asked what he meant by that, Gietzen said, "We have this concealed carry thing where half the people in Kansas are walking around with firearms."

"The way this guy acts, I'm afraid that someone's going to shoot him," Gietzen continued, referring to the escort. "He's asking for it. I don't want for that to happen.... It's not good for the cause."

Gietzen refused to say whether he or his fellow protestors are armed. "That's not a polite question to ask an individual," Gietzen said. "That's why it's concealed."

The Wichita City Council **will consider** the request to rezone the relevant area, and if council members agree, they will once again close the clinic. There is no date set for the decision, though the clinic's owners have already expressed a willingness to sue if the zoning decision goes against them.

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