

## Kansas Anti-Abortion Activist Says George Tiller's Former Clinic Is 'Trying To Provoke' Gun Violence

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The Wichita, Kan., abortion clinic that reopened in April for the first time since the 2009 shooting of Dr. George Tiller is "trying to provoke an incident" of gun violence in order to raise money, a prominent Kansas anti-abortion activist alleged Thursday.

Mark Gietzen, chairman of the Kansas Coalition for Life, said he believes the South Wind Women's Center is allowing volunteers to escort women into the clinic in hopes that they will harass the anti-abortion protesters outside and provoke a shooting. He said Julie Burkhart, the founder and owner of the clinic, would blame the incident on the protesters in order to raise money.

Gietzen also said it's possible that the father or boyfriend of the woman seeking an abortion might show up to the clinic angry and armed because they disapprove of the abortion, and a security guard or nearby protester could end up getting shot.

When one of these men "walks up carrying a gun, and he doesn't want that abortion to happen, somebody is going to get a bullet in their head," Gietzen said in an interview with the Huffington Post. "I think she's trying to provoke an incident so she can say, "Look, these pro-lifers did something," and people from California and New York and these other places will give her money."

Burkhart told HuffPost that her clinic is on "high alert" after hearing about Gietzen's comments. She said she does not have volunteer escorts at her clinic because the women can be driven past the protesters right up to the door, and added that she has no interest in provoking violence against anyone on her property.

"We absolutely don't have that strategy in mind," she said. "I just find [Gietzen's statements] to be rather curious, shocking and unnerving. We absolutely take everyone's safety and security seriously-- our patients, our employees-- and while we might not agree with what these protesters do outside, of course I would want no harm to come to them either."

Any association of Burkhart's clinic with gun violence invokes the memory of Tiller, a former physician at the clinic who was fatally shot by anti-abortion activist Scott Roeder while he was attending church. Burkhart worked with Tiller for years and [reopened his clinic](#) with a new name in April.

Several anti-abortion groups in Kansas, including Gietzen's, are now trying to convince the Wichita City Council to change its zoning requirements so that the South Wind Women's Center can no longer operate there. Gietzen [sparked controversy earlier this week](#) when he warned the Wichita City Council that if it does not force the clinic out of its current location, its neighbors would "continuously be in the line of fire."

Compounding the issue is the fact that Kansas recently [expanded concealed carry locations](#) in the state, allowing licensed permit holders to carry guns in more public venues.

"With the new conceal carry laws enacted since the closure of the Tiller Abortion Facility, the number of armed people present on-site will likely be higher, not lower," Gietzen wrote in a news release.

Burkhart said the city has no grounds on which to zone out her clinic. It serves a high level of need, she said, performing over a hundred abortions per month, and the nearest abortion clinic is about three hours away by car. Plus, her clinic is already in a medical zone.

"This area has been zoned medical since the mid 1930s or late 1930s," she said. "If they were to miraculously be able to rezone us, the Crisis Pregnancy Center to the south of us would be zoned out as well as the chiropractic and kinesiology clinics close by. I just don't think they have a lot of standing."

Two major Kansas anti-abortion groups, Kansans for Life and Operation Rescue, have joined with Gietzen to try to zone out Burkhart's clinic, but they quickly distanced themselves from Gietzen's remarks about gun violence this week.

"Kansans for Life disagrees with and wishes to completely separate ourselves from Mr. Gietzen's controversial remarks citing the potential for gun violence at abortion clinics as a reason to rezone the South Wind clinic," Mary Kay Culp, executive director of Kansans for Life, [told the Capital-Journal](#).

She added, "He said things nobody should say."