

# Court rules against Texas abortion laws

By David Lawler in Washington

ABORTION rights activists won a landmark victory yesterday as the US Supreme Court ruled that laws in Texas which would have forced half of the state's abortion clinics to close were unconstitutional.

It could put a spate of abortion laws passed in a number of conservative states in recent years in jeopardy.

The laws serve almost as *de facto* bans on abortion by forcing clinics to close and instituting onerous restrictions on doctors and patients, without

expressly contradicting the constitutionally guaranteed right to abortion.

The Texas laws invalidated by the ruling forced clinics to have hospital-level surgical facilities and mandated that doctors have the ability to admit patients to nearby hospitals.

Advocates said the measures were implemented out of concern for women's health, but opponents insisted they were designed to make it all but impossible to have an abortion.

Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate, called the decision "a victory for wom-

en in Texas and across America". However, Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, countered that the laws were intended to combat the "filthy, deplorable conditions" at abortion clinics and lambasted the court for deciding that "they know better" than elected representatives.

The court ruled 5-3 that the laws placed an "undue burden" on women.

Amy Hagstrom-Miller, president of Whole Woman's Health, the group that brought the challenge to the Texas laws to the Supreme Court, said "justice was served".

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