

# Abortion wrangling tops list of Kansas stories

TOPEKA (AP) — Kansas got no closer to resolving its decades-long debate over abortion in 2011, as tough new regulations on abortion clinics were implemented and then swiftly given stiff legal challenges that the state so far appears to be losing.

The regulations and their political fallout ranked as the state's top story of the year, according to a survey of Associated Press members in Kansas.

The state Department of Health and Environment wanted to have rules in effect July 1, spelling out the drugs, equipment and staffing abortion providers must have on hand when performing the procedure. Clinics quickly challenged the rules in court and by late December judges in both federal and state courts had blocked the rules from being enforced.

The health department is attempting to impose the new rules under a law enacted this year to require all hospitals, clinics and doctors' offices performing five or more elective abortions a month to obtain a special annual

license. Supporters contend the law and the agency's rules will protect patients. Providers and abortion rights supporters contend they're designed only to discourage physicians from terminating pregnancies.

The department initially bypassed a public hearing on its rules, which included provisions setting minimum space requirements for procedure and recovery rooms, to get them in place by July 1. The agency had a hearing in September, then dropped specific square-footage standards and made other changes.

But abortion providers still contend the rules are too burdensome and medically unnecessary.

The state celebrated the 150th anniversary of its admission to the union in 1861, but the year was marked by a host of contentious political debates, occasionally wild weather and the aftermath of other tragedies.

The second-ranked story was legislative efforts to stabilize Kansas' pension system, passing legislation to both increase the state's

commitment to funding pensions and reduce teachers' and government workers' future benefits. Lawmakers also set up a commission to study a 401(k)-style plan for new hires, mirroring a national trend of states reducing their benefits liabilities in a down economy.

The issue was likely to be among a handful of key initiatives when the Kansas Legislature convenes in January.

Mother Nature was responsible for a tie at no. 3, splitting the ranking between a record-breaking heat wave and drought that devastated crops in western Kansas with an EF-3 tornado that ripped through the town of Reading in Lyon County, killing one person and wiping out more than half of the city's 101 homes. A February snowstorm resulted in two deaths.

Other stories in the top 10:

- Gov. Sam Brownback launched an effort to overhaul the state's \$2.8 billion-a-year Medicaid program, making it fully privatized in a drive to lower costs and, he says, improve care.

- Six people were killed when the Bartlett Grain Co. elevator in Atchison exploded Oct. 29, sending a fireball high into the night sky that was visible across the Missouri River. The State Fire Marshal's Office said grain dust was ignited in the blast, which was felt by residents for miles around the city.

- Kansas became the first state to cut off its funding for arts programs when Gov. Sam Brownback vetoed the entire budget of the

Kansas Arts Commission, a move that brought him intense criticism and cost the state \$1.2 million in funding from the federal government and a regional arts alliance.

- Kris Kobach, the new Kansas secretary of state, stirred controversy with his push for a law requiring voters to show photo ID at the polls and people registering for the first time to provide proof of citizenship. Religious and business interests in the state have resisted such a law, but Kobach insists it remains a key objective as lawmakers head into the 2012 legislative session.

- An Osage county jury in August took just two hours to convict James Kraig Kahler of capital murder for the shootings of his estranged wife, their two daughters and his wife's grandmother.

- Kansas and Kansas State University officials faced another round of tension over the Big 12 Conference's future when Texas A&M and Missouri made plans to depart to the Southeastern Conference.

Other stories gaining attention from editors was scrutiny over salaries and an eventual audit and investigation surrounding the Kansas Biosciences Authority, the dismissal of charges against a man convicted of lying to U.S. immigration officials about his whereabouts during the 1994 Rwandan mass killings and the sentencing of an Air Force sergeant for exposing multiple sex partners to HIV at swinger parties.

## as top quote of the year

certitude" when asked whether a lewd photograph was in fact of him.

The list:

1. "We are the 99 percent." — slogan of Occupy movement.

2. "There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there — good for you! But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for." — U.S. Sen. candidate Elizabeth Warren, speaking in Andover, Mass., in August.

3. "My friends and I have been coddled long enough by a billionaire-friendly Congress." — Billionaire Warren Buffett, in a *New York Times* op-ed on Aug. 15.

4. "I believe in evolution and trust scientists on global warming. Call me crazy." — Candidate Jon Huntsman in an Aug. 18 tweet.

5. "Oops." — Presidential candidate Rick Perry after unsuccessfully attempting to remember the third federal agency he would

eliminate during a Nov. 9 debate.

6. "When they ask me, 'Who is the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan?' I'm going to say, 'You know, I don't know. Do you know?'" — Then-presidential candidate Herman Cain in an interview by Christian Broadcasting Network on Oct. 7.

7. "I am on a drug. It's called 'Charlie Sheen.' It's not available because if you try it once, you will die. Your face will melt off and your children will weep over your exploded body." — Actor Charlie Sheen in a February interview with ABC News.

8. "Oh wow. Oh wow. Oh wow." — Apple co-founder Steve Jobs' last words on Oct. 5, as reported by his sister in her eulogy.

9. "I can't say with certitude." — Then-U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner when he was asked whether a lewd photograph was in fact of him.

10. "Instead of receiving the help that she had hoped for, Mr. Cain instead decided to provide her with his idea of a stimulus package." — Lawyer Gloria Allred on Nov. 7 discussing Herman Cain's alleged sexual harassment of her client.

## Happy New Year!!

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