

German Public Radio

March 16, 2023 U. S. Correspondent Doris Simon

## **Federal court hears lawsuit to ban abortion pill sales.**

The news story include comments from John Pisciotta, Founding Director of Pro-Life Waco.

For 60 years, the most exciting thing here in northeast Texas was the steak challenge: anyone who ate a 2-kilo steak plus side dishes within an hour paid nothing for it.

But for the past four months, this sleepy town has had the attention of the entire country. The Alliance Defending Freedom has filed a lawsuit here in federal court in Amarillo to overturn the approval of mifepristone in the United States. This would mean that the abortion pill would no longer be available in any US state, even where abortion is legal. The drug, known as Mifegyne in Germany, is dangerous, the plaintiffs claim at the hearing. It has no advantages over surgical abortion and has been approved in a procedure for dangerous diseases, they say. Pregnancy is not a disease, says John Segal of Texas Pro Life:

Surely there must be drug agency and government oversight.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the US Department of Justice rejected the accusations at the hearing, saying that more than 5.6 million women had used the pill since it was approved 23 years ago, with fewer than 1500 complications. Before that, the drug had been tested for more than 4 years. Pregnancies could very well be a life-threatening medical condition in individual cases, the drug agency argued. Mifepristone may be sold in pharmacies and sent by post since the pandemic.

Millions of women have had no access to abortions since last year, especially in Texas, this demonstrator told local television in Amarillo. Abortion with medication is one of the last options, she said.

Matthew Kacsmaryk will decide the case. He is the only federal judge in the district. Anyone who files a lawsuit in Amarillo can be sure that Kacsmaryk has jurisdiction. Since his appointment by President Trump, the federal judge has mainly dealt with drug offences. Most recently, lawsuits with US-wide consequences have been more frequent in Amarillo. Kacsmaryk has been active in conservative causes and against abortion since he was a student. The organization suing against the US approval for mifepristone only registered in Amarillo six months ago, and its mailing address is in Tennessee. Legal historian Mary Ziegler of the University of California Davis:

This could have a bigger impact than ending legal abortion.

Federal Judge Kacsmaryk now wants to rule quickly, the date is not known. At the hearing, he was particularly interested in what might happen after the withdrawal or suspension of mifepristone's licence. If either side appeals after that, the case will go to a federal court in New Orleans, also with a conservative panel. The next level up is the Supreme Court. The US government is preparing for any eventuality, the White House spokeswoman said last week:

Measures will be taken for women's safety and health care.

When it comes to abortion, many Americans prefer medication to surgery. If this option is eliminated across the US, pressure on women's health and surgical abortion providers will increase. Since last year, clinics in many states have closed. Over 60 percent of US citizens support the right to abortion. To change this attitude, Pro-Lifer John Pisciotta and other abortion opponents are demonstrating in Texas in front of branches of pharmacy chains CVS and Walgreens. People need to know that companies were making money from abortion, says Pisciotta. Walgreens has already buckled under public pressure: Women in 20 Republican-ruled states can no longer buy mifepristone there. But Pisciotta wants the end of sales nationwide.

When people see us and we can convince them, in many cities in Texas , then things can change. That's how we till the soil, prepare the ground for more change in the future.