

New Orleans - July 14, 2014 – The “*Uptown Messenger*” in New Orleans – Della Haselle reports on the arrival of OSA



Operation Save America is bringing its “Gentle Revolution” to New Orleans, according to its website. (via operationsaveamerica.org)

The New Orleans Police Department’s Second District is preparing for Operation Save America anti-abortion protests planned for Uptown starting this weekend, police said at a meeting in headquarters Friday.

Operation Save America, a fundamentalist Christian conservative organization that opposes abortion, has planned a series of protests from Saturday (July 19) to July 26 that they refer to as “Battle for the Heart and Soul of New Orleans.” The movement is sparked by Planned Parenthood’s designs for a new 7,000-square-foot facility on South Claiborne Avenue that would perform abortions, according to the organization’s website.

“We have some unfinished Kingdom business to complete as we seek the Lord to uproot and overthrow these altars of Moloch,” Operation Save America representatives wrote on the website. Organizers claim that the city’s number of what they refer to as “death camps” have whittled down to one in New Orleans proper, from 8 in 1995.

According to [an article from Gambit](#) late last year, the \$4.2 million Planned Parenthood facility is slated to open late this year or early next year.

NOPD gearing up

Operation Save American provides few details about its plans for the weeklong protest on its website, though it does note that it has reserved 70 hotel rooms in Kenner. The website also provides updates on efforts to slow the construction of the Planned Parenthood facility on South Claiborne.

NOPD Second District Commander Paul Noel said Friday that his team had a “very robust” plan in place to provide extra security on Claiborne Avenue, as well as on other sites throughout the city.

“We feel we’re very prepared,” Noel said.

The NOPD will have extra vans, tents with shade for police officers, prison wagons and a truck with barricades, Noel said. Additionally, his unit has secured intelligence officers in plain clothing, officers equipped with body cameras and mounted officers to patrol certain areas of Uptown on horseback, he added.

“If we need more resources, we can bring them in gradually to deal with this,” Noel said.

He added that he had scheduled a meeting to discuss how to best handle protests, and the laws involved.

At Friday’s meeting, NOPD Ronal Serpas pointed to Occupy NOLA as an example of how to properly maintain crowd control in tough situations.

“Occupy NOLA did not have single problem in City of new Orleans. We did not overreact and take the bait,” Serpas said, adding that sometimes protestors “want somebody to lose their temper and cross the line and do something.”

New Orleans Abortion Fund prepared

Jessie Nieblas, a member of the board of directors of the New Orleans Abortion Fund, says she worries about the health of women seeking reproductive services when groups like Operation Save America protest.

Initiated in 2012, The New Orleans Abortion Fund is a local segment of a national organization that helps provide monetary support for women seeking a full spectrum of reproductive services, including abortions, through pledges. Last year, the fund helped 200 women, Nieblas said.

Nieblas adds that her main concern next week isn't that the group will protest the Claiborne Avenue site, which has yet to open, but that members will protest elsewhere and potentially interfere with women's ability to get services through clinics around the city.

"I do feel it's going to have a big impact on health care access while protestors are there," Nieblas said, adding that one targeted area is the Women's Health Care Center on General Pershing. "They're blocking a clinic that sees thousands of patients every year."

While there are federal laws that prohibit blocking access to clinics, Nieblas says that law isn't always followed. To that end, her organization plans to have representatives in place to help women get in and out of the clinic — but not to engage with the crowd outside.

"What's important is that they're not counter-protestors," she said.

Nieblas said she was glad to hear that NOPD had a plan in place.

"We are really counting on NOPD and other agencies to uphold the health care needs of our community," Nieblas added.