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AP: Medical board director resigns
TOPEKA (AP) -- The executive director of the board that licenses and regulates doctors in Kansas has resigned, board officials confirmed Thursday.

Jack Confer's reasons for stepping down from the Board of Healing Arts were not made public. His resignation was effective Oct. 19, said Scott Hesse, the board's general counsel.

Confer, a former medical regulator in Arizona, accepted the Kansas job in June 2008. He had appeared to win the confidence of critics who previously considered the board too slow in investigating allegations of misconduct and too lax in punishing incompetent or unethical physicians.

He had been praised by abortion opponents, who had accused the board previously of protecting abortion providers from being disciplined for misconduct. The board denied those accusations.

In March, moments after Dr. George Tiller of Wichita was acquitted of state misdemeanor charges, the board went public with a regulatory complaint over similar allegations that Tiller had violated restrictions on late-term abortions. The board dropped the case after Tiller was shot to death in May.

Confer did not return messages left on his cell phone Thursday. Hesse said Confer's reasons were between him and the board, and he wasn't involved in any discussions. Board member Sue Ice of Newton said she couldn't discuss them because it is a personnel matter. The board plans to meet Wednesday to discuss replacing Confer.

"We're sorry to receive his resignation," Ice said. "We'll be searching as quickly as possible for his replacement."

The governor appoints the board's 15 members. But there is no indication Gov. Mark Parkinson, an abortion-rights supporter, was notified of Confer's resignation before it became public Thursday, Parkinson spokeswoman Beth Martino said. Parkinson was on a trade mission to Taiwan this week.

"The governor did not pressure him to resign," Martino said.

The anti-abortion group Kansans for Life said it was "distraught" at Confer's departure.

Jerry Slaughter, executive director of the Kansas Medical Society, said he'd seen no indication that Confer was preparing to leave the board job.

Before the Kansas board hired him, Confer had been executive director of the Arizona State Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery for three years. He also worked for other agencies, including the Arizona attorney general's office.

Confer replaced Larry Buening, who had been executive director since 1992.

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