

Gov. Owens is hiding behind Ms. Norton's skirts for political cover

Dear Editor,

Planned Parenthood has decided to spin off its abortion clinics into a separate corporation. They did so in order to prevent Gov. Bill Owens' irrational decision that stripped them of critical state family planning funds, from interrupting the delivery of vitally needed health care services to women in rural Colorado. In response, Owens' state health director Jane Norton said, in an 8/27/99 Denver Post article, "This proves that Planned Parenthood realizes the weakness of its legal position." That was uncalled for, not at all evidenced, and down right mean-spirited. A description now synonymous with right wing Republican politics and politicians. I'm not convinced this statement was Norton's idea, rather, I believe it was an angry and calculated statement decided on by Owens. Ms. Norton is a foot soldier taking her marching orders directly from Governor Bill Owens and the buck stops with Governor Owens, the elected official. Planned Parenthood's decision reflects their unwavering commitment to poor women in rural Colorado. Unlike Governor Owens, Planned Parenthood recognizes that

these are real women with real health care needs and they understand that playing politics with these women's health care places them in danger and that is unconscionable. In contrast to Governor Owens's callous disregard for these women, Planned Parenthood put aside their pride, ego, and their knowledge that they were LEGALLY IN THE RIGHT and did the right thing for these women. Planned Parenthood's decision to avoid a legal battle that would have put these women's health care at risk for months on end is admirable.

I believe Governor Bill Owens will be a one-term governor. The voters of Colorado didn't give Owens a mandate to govern from the right nor will they tolerate representation by an individual who pays his campaign debts at the expense of the neediest in our state. It's not enough that his capitulation to the Christian Coalition's political blackmail was as self-serving as anything can be. It's not enough that he hides behind Ms. Norton's skirts for political cover. It's even not enough that his reasoning of the voters 1994 mandate sounds more like that of five year-old caught with his hands in the cookie jar. No,

now Governor Owens takes a nasty swipe at Planned Parenthood because they unselfishly moved to protect the low-income women in Colorado who would suffer in his game of politics. Owens held out the ~~heap~~, Planned Parenthood jumped through it to protect the women's lives that Owens had put at risk and his response, which came out of anger, desperation, frustration, and mean-spiritedness, was extremely inappropriate.

Moreover, it's clear that neither Owens nor Norton had a clue about what the availability to reproductive health care services for rural low-income women would be without Planned Parenthood clinics. In an 8/25/99 Denver Post article, Norton said, "I am convinced that a provider network exists to meet these critical health needs." She's convinced? By what evidence? She went on to say, "If there are gaps..." If there are gaps? Doesn't she know? Neither she nor Owens ever bothered, BEFORE they yanked these services away from these women in a blatant political move, to find out exactly what would be available if Planned Parenthood was not. Aware of that reality, Planned Parenthood made a

decision that was in the best interest of the women who depend on them. Governor Owens should be embarrassed because having done what is in the best interest of these women can not be said of him. And that is something the voters of Colorado also won't tolerate.

By the way, Governor Owens can't possibly believe that throwing his moderate Republicans and the women of Colorado a bone, as in his support for sensible gun control measures, will make us all forget his callous disregard for the health care needs of low-income women in rural Colorado, can he?

Finally, both Owens and Norton owe Planned Parenthood an apology. And they both owe the low-income women of rural Colorado who rely on Planned Parenthood services an apology. Sadly though, I believe that neither Jane Norton nor Governor Bill Owens have shown they have the courage or integrity to do what is right here.

Sincerely,
 Peggy E. Loonan
 Executive Director:
 Life and Liberty for Women
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