

Owens has distorted the voters' intent

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In Bob Beauprez's Oct. 15 article about Governor Bill Owens' August decision to deny Planned Parenthood state family planning funds, Beauprez says Owens respects "the will of the people." I think not! Owens insults our intelligence by erroneously and irrationally concluding that Planned Parenthood's purchase of a light bulb for their abortion clinic with private funds, available because it was freed up by state family planning money, is tantamount to "indirect" unconstitutional state support of abortion.

Owens has distorted the voters' intent with respect to the word "indirect." The voters intended no taxpayer dollars to be spent directly to pay for an abortion and voters wanted to be sure that no taxpayer money was "funneled" through the books into a clinic that performs abortions. That's a reasonable intent. State Auditor Dave Barba has documented that Planned Parenthood never, not even once, violated the voters mandate either by directly funding abortions for poor women nor indirectly, by "funneling" any taxpayer dollars through the books into one of their abortion clinics. No one, including Owens and Beauprez, has stepped forward to provide any challenge to the state auditor's audit findings of Planned Parenthood's books. Instead, Owens has graced us with his "light bulb" theory.

Perhaps they haven't challenged Barba's audits because, says my Republican sources, Mr. Barba is well respected by all, including Governor Owens himself, as a fair,

honest individual who's beyond reproach. So why would Owens insist then, on insinuating with his nonsensical "light bulb" theory and his snubbing of Barba's audit results that Barba was somehow dishonest in his findings. Because to Owens, protecting and furthering his political career is more important than honoring this man's reputation. Shame on Owens.

In addition, in embracing the "light bulb" theory to de-fund and destroy Planned Parenthood, religious conservative extremists have just thrown the baby out with the bath water. No longer can they argue for the

involvement of faith-based organizations in the provision of various social welfare services with taxpayer dollars without a demand for separate corporations to protect the letter and spirit of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution. If Planned Parenthood can't keep their operations separated - and prove it without separate corporations - neither can any religious entity!

Extremism is always irrational. Governor Owens' "light bulb" theory is irrational. Applying it to other circumstances illuminates its irrationality. For example, it is indirect unconstitutional support of a specific religion to subsidize Owens' health care with taxpayer dollars thereby freeing up money in his pocket to give to his church on Sunday. WAIT A MINUTE. It means we can't pay any public servant, at

any level of government, a salary with taxpayer dollars because every Sunday they would violate the first amendment with it. Leave it to pathetic irrational conservative Republican extremists to show us that stupid is as stupid does! This deliberate distortion of the voter's intent could stand as prima facie evidence that this is about a political

decision, a political payback. But there's more.

A few weeks ago I spoke with Dr. Jack Berry, the new President of the Colorado Medical Society. In January of 1999, a *Denver Post* article said Dr. Berry believes rural Colorado faces a

medical crisis because of a shortage of doctors and quoted Dr. Berry. "Six rural counties have no doctors, 15 counties have no obstetric care and another 146 primary-care doctors are needed statewide," he said. Further, Dr. Berry told me that his organization had supported Ms. Norton's appointment to head the health department but was now very disappointed in Owens' actions and hers and had written them expressing that sentiment.

It's a fact that neither Owens nor Norton ever bothered to find out if any health care provider was available for the women Planned Parenthood serves and could they afford the state's 40 percent reimbursement rate. If this political payback to the Christian Coalition causes even one of "those" women to lose a breast or her life to cancer because of lengthy delay in getting

access to a cancer screening pap smear or mammogram, I believe Owens would not lose one night's sleep over it. That's shameful. Nor does Owens seem interested in a common sense approach to reducing the number of abortions through access to birth control. By the way, it's worth noting that in his piece, Beauprez showed no more concern for "these" women than Owens has. I'm not surprised. I wouldn't have expected him to. But it's still appalling.

Finally, in my August 20 letter in this publication, I emphatically said that successful de-funding of Planned Parenthood would lead to these monies being awarded to so-called crisis pregnancy centers where not only would abortion referrals never happen, even if requested by a woman, but also contraceptives would never be discussed or given out. On September 21, the "Women and Children's Resource Act" was introduced in Congress by Republican religious extremists. It would provide \$85 million in taxpayer dollars for crisis pregnancy centers as long as the facilities don't provide or advocate abortions OR CONTRACEPTIVES! You think that the Christian Coalition in this state isn't aiming for that outcome? Get a life and think again.

Colorado voters have been insulted by an arrogant politician protecting his political ambitions. Owens hasn't shown even an ounce of courage here. If you can't stand tall and straight against pathetic extremists you show just how cowardly and pathetic you are.

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