

# The Colorado STATESMAN

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## Feuding over funding

*Colorado's Democratic and Republican State Chairmen weigh in on the controversial subject of funding for Planned Parenthood*

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Colorado's new Governor has shown a proclivity during his short term for locking people out. Recently he again locked the doors of the State Capitol, fearing that law abiding folks protesting human rights violations in Mexico might have the audacity to walk inside THEIR State Capitol to state their views, or worse, maybe even use one of the State House rest rooms. Who do they think they are?! What arrogance that these Colorado taxpayers think they

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Governor Owens' recent decision to withhold funding for facilities that perform abortions was not only the right thing to do, but also long overdue. And despite the irrational whining of the Democrats and certain special interest groups, the decision has nothing to do with abortion.

What Governor Owens did by denying funds to Planned Parenthood was to uphold the state constitution and the will of the people. Coloradans have voted not once, but twice, to bar any use, direct or indirect, of public money to fund abortions.

One of the apparent differences between Governor Owens and

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# Knaus: Owens locks door, cont.

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could express their First Amendment right to free speech right there under the Golden Dome of all places.

He did the same to Colorado's Disabled some months ago. And one of his first acts as Governor was to construct a wall in the reception area of his office so, God forbid, those pesky constituents wouldn't have any personal contact with their Governor. To paraphrase the Governor's hero: "Mr. Owens, tear down that wall!"

Perhaps the most dangerous act of locking people out, however, was his shameless effort to prevent Colorado's rural women from obtaining health care services. Cutting family planning funds to Planned Parenthood this past summer, resulted in locking women away from access to birth control, cancer screenings, std treatment and other essential health care services. The women who will suffer most are the women in the rural part of our state where health care choices are already extremely limited. In many cases, it eliminates their access to health care altogether.

The reasons for his actions are all too apparent. Bill Owens and Jane Norton have ignored the state auditor's findings that none of the funds in question are being used for abortion services. Not a single penny of government funds goes to pay for abortion services at the subject clinics.

But let's not let the facts get in the way of Colorado's Republican Governor placating the right wing of his party - of which he is a lifelong member.

It was payback time, pure and simple, and he's fulfilled his pledge to the Christian Coalition to defund Planned Parenthood.

The debate over the reasons for

his actions, however, is trivialized by the consequences - potentially devastating for low income and rural women. Regardless why he acted, there is no debate over the result. Governor Owens has prevented families from making responsible health choices. And most horrifying, is the thought that a missed cancer screening may have a catastrophic impact on many Colorado families.

Not only was this an example of overstepping the bounds of reasonable and logical public policymaking, it overstepped the powers of the executive branch, and the Governor in particular. Senator Mike Feeley makes a sound argument that the legislature should examine whether Owens' actions amounted to a derogation of legislative budget and policy making powers.

Most important, cutting family planning does not make fiscal, political, ethical or medical sense. Republicans and Democrats alike should place their faith in the family to make choices involving the health and care of its members. If the family is deprived of the family planning services to make those health care decisions, the family is imperiled and responsible decision making is undermined.

It costs \$161 per year to provide one woman with family planning services - hardly enough to paint one land divider stripe down the super highway system the Governor holds so dear. For every public dollar spent on family planning, taxpayers save over \$3 in health care costs.

I say to Governor Owens: if nothing else, be a fiscal conservative, be considerate of the taxpayers, and exercise some family value - take the padlock off this small source of family planning funds. "Compassionate conservatism" in action.

# Beauprez: Gov.'s right, cont.

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Governor Romer is that Owens actually respects the will of the people. Even after the people spoke loudly and clearly in both 1984 and 1988, Romer defied the constitution and the voters by continuing to provide funding to an organization that provides abortion services.

The proponents of Planned Parenthood have made the questionable argument that they keep abortion services separate from the other services they provide. If this argument doesn't violate the letter of the law, it certainly violates the spirit. Every taxpayer dollar that goes to pay for the other services Planned Parenthood provides frees up a dollar to pay for abortions - something repeatedly disapproved of by the voters.

Our Republican Party has often been described as a "big tent" with a broad diversity of opinions on various issues. When it comes to abortion, it is a well-known fact that Republican leaders and elected officials have many differing opinions. It is an issue over which thoughtful men and women can, and do, disagree. As the Chairman of the party, I believe that each of these individuals has come to their own conclusions after a great deal of thought and reflection.

On the other hand, I believe that our party is very united in the opinion that the will and votes of the people should be respected and that adherence to the constitution cannot be compromised. In cases where one believes that the people have erred in their judgment, there are two legitimate avenues to pursue; you can go to court (as has been done

with both Amendment 2 and Amendment 15) or you can go back to the people and ask them to reconsider. Simply thumbing your nose at the law and ignoring the constitution is not an acceptable response.

And finally, it is somewhat arrogant of Planned Parenthood to suggest that they are the only organization capable of delivering health and family planning services to rural, low income, women. Governor Owens and his health department have made it clear that they will continue to fund these services but to do so within the framework of the Colorado Constitution.

Tim Knauss' contention that this is some sort of political payoff to the pro-life community is, as usual, completely unfounded and off-base. If, as Planned Parenthood contends, they keep their abortion services separate from the other services they provide then the Governor's actions will have absolutely zero impact on the number of abortions performed in Colorado. This would hardly be considered a "payoff" of any kind.

If there was any form of political payoff it was to the voters of the state who have made their position quite clear both times this issue was placed before them. While recent ballot initiatives have certainly indicated the voter's unwillingness to place many restrictions on the practice of abortion, they have been equally clear in their unwillingness to pay for them. Governor Owens did the right thing and while certain special interests may not appreciate his courage, I'm betting that the average Colorado voter will.