

DAVE SCHULTHEIS: THANK GOODNESS FOR JANE NORTON

# Ms. Loonan's hysterical defense of Planned Parenthood goes against will of the people

Peggy Loonan's column in the Nov. 23 edition of The Statesman defending Planned Parenthood (PP) is riddled with sensationalism and outright falsehoods. In an article accusing the Christian Coalition of behavior that is "unconscionable, libelous,



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and morally bankrupt," Ms. Loonan significantly impugns her own moral credibility by leveling false

accusations at Governor Owens, selectively quoting the audit report of PP performed by an independent firm, falsely characterizing my amendment to last year's long bill, and painting PP, the world's largest abortion provider apart from the Chinese government, as an institution of virtue and courage working hard to reduce abortions.

Ms. Loonan does not speak for the women of Colorado, and especially not the poor, rural women of Colorado. On the contrary, she speaks for one of Colorado's most powerful special interests, one that makes its living exploiting poor, rural women rather than defending them. Ms. Loonan presents the controversy over PP funding as a product of "anti-abortion extremists" when, in reality, the controversy is a product of very sober language in the Colorado Constitution that is hardly ambiguous: "No public funds shall be used by the State of Colorado, its agencies or political subdivisions to pay or otherwise reimburse, either directly or indirectly, any person, agency or facility for the performance of any induced abortion."

In a constitutional climate such as this, it is understandable why Ms. Loonan and PP might be somewhat defensive. This does not excuse, however, her slander of Governor Owens for merely doing his job of upholding the state Constitution.

Governor Owens did not force PP to re-organize, and he did not write the Constitution. The people of Colorado did both, including poor, rural people. Owens is charged with the much more mundane task of upholding what the people have decreed. Given this, the Governor and his Public Health and Environment Director, Jane Norton, have been extraordinarily patient



with PP, even offering them an opportunity to rectify the problem areas cited in the independent audit prior to removal of their state funding. In a rather adversarial response, PP complied with some of the requests by the administration, but stated in regard to the subsidized rent for its abortion-providing division, "As the record owner of each property, we have every reason to believe that PPRM (the non-abortion division) is entitled to charge any amount it desires, including no rent whatsoever, to any individual or entity it deems to be a desirable tenant."

According to standard accounting practice, rent below the market rate constitutes a subsidy. Since PP's abortion-providing arm is receiving this subsidy from an organization that receives state funds, this constitutes an indirect subsidy of abortion. Though Ms. Loonan neglected to mention this quote from the audit report, the accounting firm put it this way: "The cost reimbursements appear to be well under market lease rates, in order to



meet statutory requirements for property tax exemption." In other words, PP's abortion arm is using its

connection to an agency receiving state funds to get cheap rent and a property tax exemption.

Ms. Loonan's misrepresentation of my amendment to last year's long bill is particularly odious, given the straightforward nature of the

amendment. According to Ms. Loonan, my effort was "designed to change the original intent of the constitutional amendment voters passed." In reality, my amendment would have changed nothing in the Constitution and added only the following 13 words to the section of the long bill pertaining to the Public Health department: "No funds shall be used to provide, advocate, or provide referrals for abortions." The Constitution does not prevent the legislature from restricting how general state funds may be used. Ms. Loonan serious in her contention that my amendment changes the meaning of the Constitution?

The funds PP has lost from the State of Colorado amount to approximately \$380,000 and represent less than 3% of PP's operating budget. The hysterical response from people such as Ms. Loonan over this small reduction is not rooted in concern for poor, rural women. It is rooted in the loss of public moral legitimacy that attends a removal of state funding, and in a desire for publicity that helps any

morally questionable organization to portray itself as a victim and pursue public sympathy. The administration notes in its press release that PP appears to be charging poor women three times the average rate for birth control pills.

It is this underhandedness and disdain for our state Constitution that represent the real threat to the poor, rural women of Colorado. Opposition to abortion, far from being the province of "extremists," is as old as Greek and Roman civilization – as old as representative government – and was specifically mentioned in the original Hippocratic Oath by which Greek physicians bound themselves to use medicine to help and not hurt. Thus, Ms. Loonan has directly reversed the poles of right and wrong. It was polished, eloquent advocates such as she to whom the original Jane Roe (of Roe v. Wade fame) referred when, regretting her involvement in legalizing abortion, she said, "With the help of willing media and the credibility of well-known columnists, the lie became known as a truth." In short, it is abortion and constitutional lawlessness that are unconscionable and morally bankrupt, not those who oppose these activities.

The people of Colorado have spoken clearly, and twice rejected appeals to change what they have put in their Constitution regarding abortion. In so doing, the noble people of the State of Colorado stand in the long and distinguished tradition of moral self-government and defense of the defenseless. Their Constitution reflects great credit upon them and the legacy of life and law they wish to leave to their posterity. Thank goodness for the people of Colorado! And thank goodness for a woman like Jane Norton willing to defend their Constitution.

State Rep. Dave Schultheis, R-Colorado Springs, is serving his first term in the House.

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