

# Owens in the dark with 'light bulb' theory



**Peggy Loonan**  
Soapbox

In 1999, Gov. Bill Owens used his "light bulb theory" to redefine the intent of Colorado voters, forcing Planned Parenthood to split its contraceptive and abortion services into two separate corporations, despite their being in complete compliance with the voter mandate that says no taxpayer money can be used to pay directly or indirectly for the performance of an abortion.

Colorado voters' intended there be no funneling of taxpayer money from Planned Parenthood's family planning clinics to their abortion clinics, which all previous state audits have concluded, and this independent audit concluded — has never and isn't now occurring. In 1999, Jane Norton, State Health Department Director, explained Owens' "light bulb theory" to me.

It goes like this: If state family planning funds, spent only for family planning (this recent audit agrees they clearly are) frees up private funds donated to PP, that gives the Services Corp. (the abortion corporation) a benefit — a lease payment under market value consistent with established practices that follow the law (a consistency confirmed by this recent audit, and I might add, a benefit that

all other nonprofit PP leases also receive) — then the performance of an abortion has indirectly been paid for.

That insults our intelligence. It's extremism at its worst because it deliberately subverts the will of the people as a means to a political end. On Dec. 14, Owens stripped Planned Parenthood of its family planning funds after using his "light bulb theory" to interpret a conclusion made by the accounting firm of Anderson and Whitney of Greeley. Anderson and Whitney were paid more than \$7,000 of taxpayer money because, according to Cynthia Honssinger, director of legal affairs for state health, they just couldn't wait for the state auditor to do it.

Alan Holmberg of Anderson and Whitney said, "paying less than fair market value doesn't demonstrate the independence of the affiliates and could be viewed as providing an indirect benefit to Services Corp." It is curious that Holmberg would use the word "indirect." Demonstration of the independence of the affiliates that voters demanded has to do with whether the benefit the Services Corp. gets flows from the funneling of taxpayer money. It doesn't. Holmberg's statement and his firm's audit prove that. Holmberg's use of the word indirect is meant to insinuate that its meaning in his statement is synonymous with the meaning Colorado voters intended, and that's false.

But why? Perhaps, because with-

out some allegedly incriminating statement from this so-called "independent" accounting firm, a statement Owens couldn't be sure he'd get from the state auditor's office, Owens knew he didn't dare accuse Planned Parenthood of non-compliance and he desperately needed political cover in the 2002 elections for defunding Planned Parenthood.

Owens has made a decision that will increase, in his state, the number of abortions and deaths from cervical and breast cancer. Owens is up for re-election, facing a huge political debt to his extreme anti-abortion right wing base, a slowing economy, shrinking revenues. He's a politician who's betting that by next November voters will have forgotten how he hijacked, not upheld their mandate, with his "light bulb theory" and forgotten his abandonment of thousands of low-income Colorado women.

Finally, I appreciated youth columnist Sabrina Karim's courageous stand for access to family planning services by low-income women in our state. It's gratifying to see our youth involved in such a critical issue. I also appreciated nurse practitioner Marsha Scott's Jan. 2 Soapbox detailing Larimer County family planning services, a most valuable resource for our community.

Peggy Loonan of Fort Collins is executive director of Life and Liberty for Women. She can be reached at [peggy@lifeandlibertyforwomen.org](mailto:peggy@lifeandlibertyforwomen.org)