

Owens' plan against Planned Parenthood a political move

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 Planned Parenthood 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 into its abortion clinics, which all previous state audits have concluded — and an independent audit also concluded — has never and isn't now occurring.

In 1999, Jane Norton, director of Colorado's Department of Health, explained Owens' light-bulb theory to me. It goes like this: If state family-planning funds (spent only for family planning, and this recent audit agrees they clearly are) free up private funds donated to Planned Parenthood, then that gives the abortion corporation (known as Services Corp.) a benefit. That benefit is a lease payment that is under market value, consistent

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with established practices that follow the law (a consistency confirmed by the recent audit). Then, according to the theory, the performance of an abortion has indirectly been paid for.

The light-bulb theory insults our intelligence. It's extremism at its most dangerous because it deliberately subverts the will of the people as a means to a political end.

On Dec. 14, Gov. 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 the state health department, 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's 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 "indi-

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rect" 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 without 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 noncompliance, and he desperately needed political cover in the 2002 elections for defunding Planned Parenthood.

Gov. Owens has made a decision that will increase in Colorado 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 is betting that by next November voters will have forgotten how he hijacked, not upheld, their mandate with his light bulb theory and will have forgotten his abandonment of thousands of low-income Colorado women.

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