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40 Years: Planned Parenthood Becomes Abortion Empire

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40 Years: Planned Parenthood Becomes Abortion Empire

By Randall K. O'Bannon Ph.D.

It may surprise some people, but there was a time when Planned Parenthood actually took an official position opposing abortion. A 1963 pamphlet said that "An abortion kills the life of the baby after it has begun."

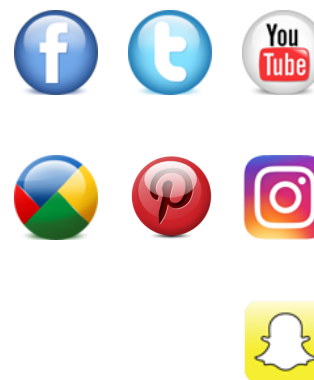
There are legitimate questions as to the sincerity of this declaration, coming as it did at a time when abortion was not officially allowed in America. But there is little doubt that Planned Parenthood soon changed its tune, fiercely fighting to legalize abortion and going on to become the nation's largest abortion chain and most powerful abortion lobby. In 2009, PPFA clinics aborted over 329,000 babies.

From what we can tell, Planned Parenthood first officially began performing abortions in 1970 in Syracuse, New York, on the first day the state legalized them. And shortly thereafter, George Langmyhr, chair of Planned Parenthood's Medical Committee, published an article in the December 1971 issue of *Clinical Obstetrics & Gynecology* stating, "We support the view that when an unwanted pregnancy has occurred, abortion services should be available, with the decision essentially being made by the patient and her doctor In summary, Planned Parenthood hopes that abortion will become even more available and supports the efforts of others in seeking reform and repeal of outdated laws."

Planned Parenthood has never looked back. It launched a defense of New York's permissive abortion law and filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court arguing for abortion to be legalized nationwide without restrictions. It began offering abortions in New York City while waiting for the court to make its decision on abortion on *Roe*.

While there are estimates that it performed less than 2,000 abortions in those first couple of years, Planned Parenthood's numbers began to climb steadily once the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand nationwide in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.

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The 5,000 abortions Planned Parenthood is estimated to have performed in 1973 then represented only about 0.6% of the abortions performed in the U.S. Performing 58,660 abortions in 1977, the percentage grew to 4.5%. It increased to 6.7% with the 104,411 abortions Planned Parenthood performed in 1987. By 2001, the percentage had climbed to 16.5% when Planned Parenthood topped the 200,000 mark with 213,026 abortions. Today, the 329,445 abortions performed at Planned Parenthood clinics in 2009 represent about 27.1%, or more than one out of every four abortions occurring in the United States.

That Planned Parenthood's numbers would grow as more abortions began to be performed in the U.S. is not surprising. But it tells you something very significant about the organization that Planned Parenthood's numbers grew even as abortions leveled off in the United States—and even after the number of abortions began to decline. Planned Parenthood was grabbing a bigger and bigger market share.

A look back at several of the landmark cases argued before the Supreme Court in the years since *Roe* find the organization at the center of the abortion struggle in the United States, committed to abortion at any stage, for any reason, to any person, and believing that this was a “right” that governments should not only support, but fund with taxpayer dollars.

In one of the first cases to challenge the court's *Roe* ruling, *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth* (1976), PPFA defended saline abortions and challenged parental and spousal consent laws. Soon after, the organization opposed reporting requirements and limits on post-viability abortions in *Planned Parenthood Association of Kansas City v. Ashcroft* (1983).

Informed consent, waiting periods, parental consent, spousal notification, and even the collection of abortion statistics were challenged in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* (1992). Showing how far it was willing to go, Planned Parenthood defended the practice of partial-birth abortion before the Supreme Court in *Gonzales v. Planned Parenthood* (2007).

Some of these cases Planned Parenthood won, others it lost. With the Supreme Court, there were often mixed results, and sometimes the High Court later adopted a limit it had once rejected.

Planned Parenthood was one of the most vigorous opponents of the Hyde Amendment, the amendment crafted by the legendary Illinois congressman in the 1970s limiting government funding of abortion, a policy Planned Parenthood continues to challenge to this day, even as it maneuvers to get its hands on a bigger share of the nation's health care funding under ObamaCare.

Owing to the complexity of federal and state budgets and somewhat confusing financial data from Planned Parenthood, it is difficult to tell precisely how much money the organization has gotten from the government over the years. But Planned Parenthood has been drinking from that spigot since at least 1970, when Congress passed Title X, the national “family planning” program, and it has grown increasingly reliant on government funding to cover substantial portions of its budget.

For example, while Planned Parenthood reported \$171.9 million in “Government Grants and Contracts” for 1996 (fiscal year), 34% of its income, it listed \$487.4 million in “Government Health Services Grants and Reimbursements” in fiscal 2010, 46% of the revenues the billion-dollar corporation took in that year.

Thanks to the Hyde Amendment, which Planned Parenthood despises, the federal Medicaid program does not currently fund abortions (except to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest). But at least 17 states, and several local governments, do use public funds to fund elective abortions. All told, there were 177,404 publicly funded abortions in U.S. in 2006, certainly many of those at Planned Parenthood clinics.

This is one of the reasons why, in recent years, there have been moves afoot to defund Planned Parenthood at both the state and federal level. An attempt to cut funds at the federal level in 2011 were unsuccessful, owing to strong support for Planned Parenthood in the Senate and backing from the Obama White House. Efforts at the state level were more favorable, with Indiana, Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, and Wisconsin all passing legislation to limit funding in some

In many of those public discussions, spokespeople for Planned Parenthood have tried to argue that abortion is a minimal part of its business, representing just 3% of its services. **National Right to Life News** has challenged this misleading characterization on numerous occasions (e.g., www.nationalrighttolifeneeds.org/NewsOnline/April-May2011/QandAOBannon.html), but the gist of this accounting gimmick is to count every packet of birth control pills, every pregnancy test, every box of condoms, etc., as a separate service, regardless of their relative cost, or whether their sale was part of a larger package of services included with service the client came in for.

When looked at in terms of clients, Planned Parenthood factsheets show between 11-12% of its customers receiving abortions. Even this fails to count the number of women who come into Planned Parenthood for abortions but leave after a pregnancy test shows them not to be pregnant—but not before being sold birth control, an STD test, etc.

Revenue tells the real story, however. At going rates (\$451 for a surgical abortion at 10 weeks in 2009, according to Guttmacher), the 329,445 abortions performed at Planned Parenthood in 2009 would represent at least \$148.6 million in revenues, easily more than it would have taken in for pregnancy tests, birth control pills, STD tests, etc. And this is without even considering the higher cost of chemical abortions or later surgical abortions that many Planned Parenthood clinics advertise and perform.

All told, it explains why Planned Parenthood is so adamant in defending this supposedly inconsequential part of its business.

Planned Parenthood, a marketing genius, has always devoted a great deal of money, time, and energy to defending its message. Over the years, it has tried different strategies, sometimes trying to capitalize on the tenor of the times, other times appealing to different audiences.

Early on, it tried to shoehorn its defense of abortion into its whole “better world through birth control” agenda, arguing that abortion was essential to help protect poor women from “excessive childbearing.” Some of that same theme can be found in today’s arguments, made by Planned Parenthood and its allies, that every dollar spent on “family planning” saves the taxpayers nearly four dollars in spending on medical care, welfare benefits, and social services that would go to women getting pregnant and giving birth.

Appeals to “choice” and “the right to choose” dropped mention of abortion entirely and tried to make the issue one of personal freedom. What abortion was about or what happened during an abortion was, conveniently, never brought up. In one advertisement from 1985, Planned Parenthood tried to argue that “At the most basic level, the abortion issue is not really about abortion. It is about the value of women in society.”

Sometimes several of these themes are blended together, as they were in the last election, equating challenges on Planned Parenthood’s funding and its abortion agenda with attacks on “women’s health.”

Its latest theme, “Care. No matter what,” serves to push its identity as a health care provider and its concern for women while at the same time signaling its resolution against its critics. None of this self promotion changes the fact that Planned Parenthood offers a limited range of “services” (for example, it offers prenatal care or referrals to adoption services to a relative handful of patients, and the “breast exams” it touts are manual—Planned Parenthood clinics don’t offer mammography), but keeps trying to expand its profitable abortion business.

Some have made much of the closing of clinics and the dissolution of Planned Parenthood affiliates in recent years. While it is a good thing when Planned Parenthood closes a killing center in any community, a more careful examination shows that something more nefarious may be going on.

In the last decade or so, Planned Parenthood has undergone a massive restructuring, closing unprofitable clinics, cutting expensive middle management, merging underperforming affiliates with larger, more aggressive ones. But in the place of older, smaller clinics with limited services (that is,

rooms and multiple exam rooms, the sort of facilities required for processing large numbers of abortion patients.

Smaller clinics are staying in business by adding chemical abortions with RU486 to their offerings, often via web-cam hookup with an abortionist at one of the larger mega-clinics. None of this makes abortion safer—in fact, it increases the danger to the mother—but it does make more centers profitable.

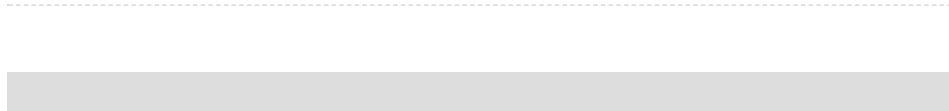
Though presented as an effort to “standardize services,” a mandate from the national office that all Planned Parenthood affiliates have at least one abortion-performing center by the end of 2012 makes abortion’s critical contribution to the organization’s bottom line and its centrality to Planned Parenthood’s mission all the more apparent.

That this is more than a health crusade is made apparent by Planned Parenthood’s official endorsement of pro-abortion Barack Obama in the two previous elections and its spending more than \$12 million in this last election cycle to elect the president and other supporters of abortion.

Planned Parenthood started small, the vision of one woman, Margaret Sanger. PPFA has finessed its founder’s many unattractive comments, including her fondness for eugenics, acting as if (should its own publicity be believed) it only backed into abortion to address an unmet “health” need.

But now, 40 years later, Planned Parenthood has become an abortion behemoth, the nation’s largest abortion chain, seeking to further expand its reach and revenues, and the lead player in a campaign to normalize the killing of children, to make it an accepted medical service and a standard offering of government-supported health care.

When you think “Planned Parenthood,” think “abortion.” It’s clear that it does.



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