

The Decline of Planned Parenthood

by Rod Thomson

WINDING DOWN: A Planned Parenthood employee in Abilene, Texas, prepares files for transfer to a different facility in November 2012—the day the Abilene center shut its doors for good.

As the nation's abortion rate drops, its largest purveyor increasingly finds itself in the center of allegations of fraud and abuse.

Planned Parenthood is under siege over shoddy, fraudulent and dangerous practices at centers bearing its logo across the country.

Over the past few years, about a dozen former employees at Planned Parenthood facilities from coast to coast have blown the whistle on the atrocities taking place within their own walls. That has put the group on the defense in federal and state courtrooms as well as the court of public opinion. The result is that Planned Parenthood now is paying millions of dollars in legal settlements over serial abuses ranging from billing fraud to unsanitary operating conditions—even a botched abortion that was allegedly performed on a Colorado woman who was trying to leave after deciding to keep her baby.

Those are dire events for the most recognizable purveyor of abortion in the country. Planned Parenthood has \$1.3 billion in net assets, and a huge chunk of its money comes from taxpayers—\$540.6 million in FY 2012-13. It's the very mainstream of abortion.

This pattern has accelerated the closing of many Planned Parenthood facilities, which have been falling into disuse. In response, Planned Parenthood decided last year to mandate that every one of its 820 remaining centers nationwide perform abortions.

"The tide is turning," says Marilyn Musgrave, vice president for governmental affairs at the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List in Washington, D.C. "People are seeing what Planned Parenthood is all about."

Fraud and Abuse

Of the many undercover reports on Planned Parenthood conducted by pro-life organizations and alternative media outlets to date, the most successful have been done by Live Action, a five-year-old advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. Lila Rose and her team have videotaped evidence of Planned Parenthood employees using coercive and manipulative

techniques to convince women to abort, facilitating sex- and race-selective abortions and discussing their willingness to cover up the sexual exploitation of minors. They've also caught Planned Parenthood workers misleading pregnant women about what will happen to their babies during the procedure.

The group's investigations so far have resulted in about a dozen investigations and changes in state and federal laws. An undercover video of a New Jersey

products that were unnecessary, not covered by Medicaid or never provided at all.

She claimed her bosses at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, which operates seven facilities in the Houston area and two in Louisiana, were under financial duress and told staffers to turn every visitor into a "revenue-generating client"; meanwhile, several facilities in the organization falsified medical records for years to obtain the claims.

Reynolds' case is settled. But Abby Johnson, who worked her way up to the position of manager at Planned Parenthood's Bryan, Texas, facility over eight years of employment, resigned after seeing an ultrasound of a 13-week-old baby fighting against a suction machine in her mother's womb.

Johnson, who had two abortions herself before giving birth to a daughter, then became a pro-life advocate. In 2009, she filed a lawsuit with documents purporting to show more than 87,000 instances of fraud at Planned Parenthood facilities across Texas during her eight-year tenure there. The Bryan facility closed its doors for good in September 2013.

Victor Gonzales, former vice president of finance and administration for Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles, filed a lawsuit in 2008 alleging the clinic overbilled federal and state governments by \$180 million from the late 1990s until at least 2008. The case was dismissed in 2009 but in 2010 was reinstated by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, where it was still pending at press time.

In Iowa, Sue Thayer, who managed Planned Parenthood's Storm Lake facility for 17 years, filed a lawsuit in 2012 claiming the group submitted false, fraudulent and ineligible claims for Medicaid reimbursements. The case is currently pending in the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

These and other fraud allegations prompted the non-partisan federal Government Accountability Office last August to launch an investigation into how Planned Parenthood is spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. That investigation is ongoing.

"Throughout the country there are fraud schemes we see that appear to be nationally directed," says Michael Norton, senior counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom, a religious-liberties law firm based in Arizona that represents Johnson and Reynolds.



HIGH PRAISE: President Obama, flanked here by Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards, has delivered keynote speeches at Planned Parenthood fundraising events. The organization receives \$1.5 million from taxpayers per day.

Planned Parenthood facility resulted in Illinois passing a bill expanding protections for underage girls in 2011. And last year, Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., showed his colleagues one of Live Action's videos, which helped a bill banning abortions after 20 weeks pass the chamber 228-196 in June.

"Planned Parenthood's best strategy is to deceive people about the reality of their day-to-day activities," Rose says. "Part of our role is to reveal that reality."

Some of the most powerful revelations so far have come from those who worked inside the clinics—some of whom have gone not to the media, but to the authorities.

White-Collar Crime

In Texas, staff members at two Planned Parenthood facilities resigned in 2009, then blew the whistle on fraudulent billings to the state and the federal government.

In one case, Karen Reynolds, who had worked for Planned Parenthood for 10 years, gave testimony that resulted in the abortion seller paying a \$4.3 million settlement to the government in July 2013. Her lawsuit alleged that Medicaid was billed for services and

But fraud isn't the only issue causing employees concerns. They're talking about patient safety as well.

'Unsafe'

Last July, two nurses at a Delaware Planned Parenthood facility resigned, saying they feared they would lose their licenses if the unsafe, unsanitary conditions prevalent there were allowed to continue.

One of the nurses, Jane Mitchell-Werbrich, told the local ABC affiliate in Wilmington, "It was just unsafe. I couldn't tell you how ridiculously unsafe it was. (The abortionist) didn't even wear gloves." The operating table was "not washed down, it's not even cleaned off," she added. "It has bloody drainage on it."

The other nurse, Joyce Vasikonis, told ABC, "They were using instruments on patients that were not sterile." Both nurses remain pro-abortion but now say they believe all Planned Parenthood facilities should be shut down for mistreating women.

Melony Meanor, a former manager at the same Delaware clinic, testified in front of a state legislative committee in July that Planned Parenthood's negligence went beyond abortion: Workers failed to report approximately 200 positive test results for chlamydia and gonorrhea to patients over a six-month period between 2011 and 2012. She urged women to get their medical care elsewhere.

"Those nurses were bold enough to step out and they're not even pro-life," says Anna Higgins, director of the Family Research Council's Center for Human Dignity in Washington, D.C.

In February 2013, a Colorado woman sued Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, saying staffers at the Colorado Springs facility forced her to have an abortion after she changed her mind. According to the suit, when they couldn't get an IV into her arm to anesthetize her, she told the abortionist she did not want to go through with the procedure, but he performed it anyway. Two days later she was forced to go to a hospital emergency room with an infection created by the fetal remains the abortionist had left in her body.

"This demonstrates that abortionists like Planned Parenthood are not concerned about the health and safety of women, but rather in their bottom line profits," says Norton, whose organization is representing the victim. "That is why they so vigorously fight against common-sense abortion safety and sanitation regulations that serve to protect the health and welfare of women and do no more than require abortionists to abide by the same rules as apply to ambulatory surgical centers."

Cash Cows and Counter Attacks

But Planned Parenthood is not an organization to go quietly into the night. It has a slew of powerful allies in its corner, a deep-pocket political action committee to spend money on elections and ballot issues and an arsenal of cash with which to promote abortions. The group is pushing back on all three fronts.

"They have a very active and lucrative political action committee where they spent more than \$15 million last election cycle," Norton says. "It's a 900-pound gorilla in the political arena."

The abortion organization gets an enormous amount of money from taxpayers for its medical and marketing programs, which then frees up money from private donors to fund abortion activists running for office.

According to Planned Parenthood's 2012-13 annual report, released in December, the group had more than \$1.3 billion in total net assets. That includes \$540.6 million it received from taxpayers that year—approximately \$1.5 million per day.

And while it's technically a non-profit organization, the fact is Planned Parenthood makes a pretty solid profit every year from abortion and other "reproductive health" services such as sales of the morning-after pill, gynecological exams and tests for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Planned Parenthood's activities are circular: By distributing condoms and maintaining a Web site for young people that is noted for its racy videos, it actively promotes a culture of casual sex outside of marriage. The group then reaps a financial profit from that culture by selling tests and "services" to people

"I couldn't tell you how ridiculously unsafe it was."

Former Planned Parenthood employee

Jane Mitchell-Werbrich

who have casual sex and then worry about pregnancy and STDs.

Planned Parenthood refers to those profits as "excess" revenues. According to its 2012-13 annual report, its excess revenues were \$58.2 million. Since 2000, Planned Parenthood has had total excess revenues of \$771 million.

While abortions overall are level or declining in the country, according to the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), Planned Parenthood is performing more than ever: Its 2012-13 annual report states that while its abortion rates dropped 2 percent

from the record 333,964 abortions it performed in 2011-12—approximately 27 percent of the 1.2 million abortions performed nationwide during that time period—abortion still accounts for 93.8 percent of its pregnancy services. Prenatal care services fell 32 percent from 2011-12, and is now down 52 percent from 2009. And for every adoption Planned Parenthood helped facilitate in some way last year, it performed 149 abortions.

America Unaware

Despite these staggering statistics, a large percentage of Americans are unaware that Planned Parenthood dominates the abortion industry.

According to a survey conducted last May by The Polling Company, Inc., 88 percent of Americans said they are familiar with Planned Parenthood, but 55 percent said they did not know the group performs abortions.

“Planned Parenthood has done a really good job marketing themselves,” Higgins says.

But as that marketing success unravels with every report of fraud and abuse, pro-life lawmakers are becoming increasingly successful at scaling back

DEMANDING AN ACCOUNT: Church members from House Speaker John Boehner’s home district call on him to stop supplying Planned Parenthood with their tax dollars in 2011.

abortion on demand. Thirteen states—Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Texas—have already passed bans on abortions after 20 weeks and more are considering doing so.

These bans are the biggest legislative steps forward since the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban, enacted in 2003. And they are the direct result of more knowledge of what is happening in the womb—and also and what is happening in abortion facilities.

When you expose that, says Rose, “it creates a firestorm of media controversy and compels legislators to take action.” ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read Planned Parenthood’s 2012-13 annual report at <http://bit.ly/18Hdm9B>. To learn more about the pro-life advocacy groups mentioned in this story, visit liveaction.org, sba-list.org, frc.org, nrlc.org or alliancedefendingfreedom.org. For more details on the declining rate of abortion nationwide, visit <http://bit.ly/1iAfnKh>.

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