



Abortion lobby powers the Democratic money machine

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President Obama reminded us in of abortion's preeminent role in the Democratic Party by refusing to budge on cutting federal subsidies for Planned Parenthood.-AP File
Dining with President Obama Tuesday night at a private \$30,000-a-plate fundraiser in the tony Austin, Texas, neighborhood of Westlake Hills was Cecile Richards, CEO of abortion provider and lobbying powerhouse Planned Parenthood. It was a telling reminder of an underappreciated dynamic in Democratic fundraising.

Obama reminded us in April of abortion's pre-eminent role in the Democratic Party: After acquiescing to Republican demands on taxes and spending, he wouldn't budge on federal subsidies for Planned Parenthood. To better understand Democrats' inflexibility on this matter, follow the money.

The abortion lobby spends about \$40 million each election to help Democrats. EMILY's List, dedicated to electing pro-choice Democratic women, operates a political action committee (which can directly fund candidates), a 527 committee (which can run only "issue ads"), and a so-called SuperPAC (which use media to support or oppose candidates). In each of the past three election cycles, the group's PAC and 527 have both been in the top four of those supporting Democrats. The PAC has spent \$82 million in that period, while the 527 has spent \$35 million, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics. In 2010, the group created a SuperPAC, which spent \$3.6 million, making it the fifth biggest such group in the country.

More important, however, may be the social dynamics among wealthy liberals who make up the Democrats' fundraising network. Everywhere you see Obama and his party raising money, you see an abortion activist playing a lead role.

Priorities USA, for instance, is a new organization -- legally independent from the Obama campaign, but intimately tied to it -- set up to spend \$100 million in ads and mailings helping Obama and attacking the Republican nominee. Politico reported that the group's first donors include Ellen Malcolm, founder of EMILY's List. In the last election, Malcolm gave more than \$34,000 to Democrats.

The Democrats typically fill their top fundraising posts with the most vociferous defenders of legal abortion and Planned Parenthood subsidies. For example, Obama tapped ardently pro-choice congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz as chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee. Richards, of Planned Parenthood, has publicly lauded Wasserman-Schultz as a "heroine" of the cause.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, during the spring budget debates, deployed congresswoman Diana DeGette, co-chairwoman of the House Pro-Choice Caucus, to raise \$100,000 in a night on the issue of taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood.

Obama's top Texas fundraiser is Naomi Aberly, who also sits on the board of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, the lobbying and political arm of Planned Parenthood. Hosting fundraisers in Boston for Obama since 2007 is former John Kerry intimate, Paul Egerman, a health care chief executive officer. Egerman's wife, Joanne, sits on the board of Planned Parenthood of Massachusetts and is an officer in PPAF.

If you want to know who's attending these \$30,000 fundraisers with Obama many times a month, comb through the donor list to the DNC. You'll find that the wealthy liberals attending these fetes in San Francisco, Miami and Manhattan are likely to be actively involved with the abortion issue.

Take San Francisco abortionist Edward Steve Lichtenberg, formerly of Chicago, who has been bankrolling Obama's career since his 2004 Senate run. Dr. Lichtenberg has given more than \$50,000 to Obama's DNC.

Or millionaire investor Aaron Sosnick, who lives in an East Village penthouse. He gave the maximum to the Obama Victory Fund in 2008, and the max to the DNC in 2009 and 2010 - meaning he's probably attended three VIP Obama fundraisers since Obama wrapped up the nomination in 2008. Sosnick was also the top donor last cycle to Women Vote!, EMILY's List's SuperPAC, giving them \$100,000.

Whether Obama is digging for cash in Greenwich or Palm Beach, the well-heeled crowds are packed with successful, well-educated liberal baby boomers for whom abortion is pillar of gender equality. For many middle-aged feminists, women become second-class citizens unless abortion is legal and, frankly, fully accepted by American society. That's why taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood is such a visceral issue: it's not enough for abortion to be merely tolerated; it must be legitimized as a public service.

Now imagine if Obama had agreed to cut Planned Parenthood funding, or if he ever betrayed the cause of legalized abortion. It would make things pretty uncomfortable around the dinner table at his next fundraiser.

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