

NEWS

Assault on women's health cloaked as deficit reduction

By **THE TIMES-STANDARD** |

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We are writing to alert Times-Standard readers about the most aggressive assault on women's health in American history. This week the House of Representatives voted to eliminate the national family planning program known as Title X. The House will also vote on an amendment introduced by Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) to prohibit all Planned Parenthood health centers from receiving any federal funds to provide affordable cancer screenings, birth control, HIV testing, as well as testing and treatment for other sexually transmitted diseases. If the Senate votes to confirm Title X elimination, then many local women and men will be affected.

Under the guise of deficit reduction, the newly elected House Republican leadership and Rep. Pence are insidiously pursuing an agenda that is bad policy, bad economics and bad politics.

Eliminating the national family planning program (Title X) and federal funding for PP is bad policy. If successful, the Republicans' plan to exclude Planned Parenthood from all critical public health funding streams will only hurt Americans — taking away health care that millions of women receive today. Not one dime of this public money goes toward abortions. Instead of supporting programs that reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, Republican House leaders are aggressively pursuing policies that would dismantle programs that prevent 973,000 unintended pregnancies and 406,000 abortions each year.

Here on the North Coast, Six Rivers Planned Parenthood (SRPP), Eureka Health Center, Weaverville Health Center, and Medical Outreach Team served 9,211 individual patients in 2010. Title X dollars help SRPP provide high-quality health care regardless of people's ability to pay. For many women, especially those in rural areas and underserved communities like Humboldt, Del Norte, and Trinity counties, Planned Parenthood is their only source of health care.

Eliminating the national family planning program (Title X) and federal funding for PP is bad economics. Established by President Nixon in 1970, Title X prevents nearly one million unintended pregnancies each year, almost half of which would otherwise end in abortion. Without Title X, more women will experience unintended pregnancies and face potentially life-threatening cancer and other diseases that could have been prevented. A new report by the nonpartisan Guttmacher Institute, *State Facts About Title X and Family Planning: California*, finds that the Title X program not only ensures access to these critical health care services, but it generates almost \$4 in budget savings for every one dollar invested in the program. The report demonstrated that the House Republican plan would have a serious detrimental effect on California women and teens, and on the California state budget.

Eliminating the national family planning program (Title X) and federal funding for PP is bad politics. Ultimately, Rep. Pence's proposal is an ideological attack on a specific health care provider. In each of the past three Congresses, Rep. Pence has introduced bills that prohibit Title X family planning funding from going to health care providers that separately provide abortion care with private funds, as well as bills that specifically target Planned Parenthood health centers. A majority of Americans do not support cuts to these services. A January 2011 CBS/New York Times survey found that by a margin of 67 percent to 27 percent, Americans oppose cuts for health care and education as a means of reducing the deficit.

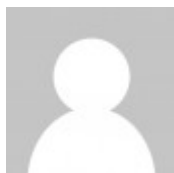
As Clergy for Choice, we are a local group of faith leaders whose mission is to support the work of Six Rivers Planned Parenthood in providing medically accurate, safe, and comprehensive reproductive health care and sex education. We do so out of a commitment to reproductive justice and religious freedom.

Please join us in challenging the unconscionable threat to women's health being perpetrated by some in Congress. Each one of us must stand up to tyranny in order to protect the religious freedom upon which this country was founded. Talk with your family and friends. And please call and thank Congressman Mike Thompson and Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer for continuing to vote for women's health.

Clergy for Choice: Nancy Dye, MPH, Ph.D., Convener; Rev. Eric Duff; Rev. Jeri Gray-Reneberg; Rev. Dave Holmquist; Rev. Steve Lundin; Mary Meengs, M.D.; Rev. Sara Potter; Rev. Javan Reid; Scott Sattler, MD; Carol Scher; Doralee Smith; Rabbi Naomi Steinberg; Rev. Cindy Storrs and Rev. Carlotta Vallerga.

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