

Defunding Planned Parenthood would be costly

**BY DARRAH DIGIORGIO
JOHNSON**

Who could possibly believe that by denying women breast exams and cancer screenings, they would be working to improve life in the United States?

As out of touch as it seems, extremists in Congress are gearing up for another attack on women's health. After nearly shutting down the government recently in a failed assault on Planned Parenthood, they were back again, pushing the same misguided proposal.

Rep. Mike Pence of Indiana peddled the bill as an effort to restrict federal funding for abortion, but it

would do no such thing.

As Pence knows, federal law has barred such funding for more than 30 years. The bill's real targets are family planning and women's health care, which make up more than 90 percent of the care women receive from Planned Parenthood.

If this misguided measure became law, it would lock millions of women out of the Planned Parenthood health centers they rely on for cancer screenings, birth control and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. And while endangering women's health, the bill would also increase unintended pregnancy and the need for abortion.

One woman in 5 in the

U.S. has turned to a Planned Parenthood health center for care at some point in her life.

For the 2 million people Planned Parenthood serves through federal programs like Medicaid and Title X each year, those health centers are a ready source of affordable, high-quality care that no one else provides. If the Pence proposal became law, its impact would be measured in undiagnosed cancers, untreated sexually transmitted infections and a flood of abortions of unintended pregnancies.

Not surprisingly, the recent assault on Planned Parenthood has provoked a backlash. Women and men from every community

have come forward to stand with Planned Parenthood — and reasonable policymakers from both sides of the aisle have paid attention. By pursuing this senseless proposal, the House leadership displayed not only moral bankruptcy but also political foolhardiness.

A new poll released by CNN on April 11 shows that 65 percent of all Americans want Planned Parenthood to continue receiving government support. Other polls show that 68 percent of people younger than 35 oppose the assault on Planned Parenthood, as do 64 percent of Latinos and 60 percent of women.

Family planning saves taxpayers nearly \$4 for

every \$1 invested.

Eliminating family planning would increase costs for the government, and locking Planned Parenthood out of federal programs would make those programs less efficient.

If all of Planned Parenthood's 3 million patients had to get their care from other publicly funded providers, the total cost could increase by as much as \$200 million a year.

Any public official who considers that a good deal should be in a different line of work.

DARRAH DIGIORGIO
JOHNSON is president and
CEO of Planned Parenthood
of the Pacific Southwest.