



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 1, 2012

Texas Battles Obama Over Planned Parenthood Defunding

The state of Texas finds itself in a battle with the Obama administration over its decision to defund Planned Parenthood, the nation's premier abortion provider. "At the direction of lawmakers and Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott," reported the Texas Tribune, "the Texas Health and Human Services commissioner signed a rule [February 23] that formally bans Planned Parenthood clinics and other 'affiliates of abortion providers'" from participating in the Texas Women's Health Program (WHP), which provides a variety of health services to low-income women throughout the state, including "family planning." Planned Parenthood had confirmed that it was providing some 40 percent of the services offered through WHP.



As reported by [LifeNews.com](#), last December the Obama administration [informed the Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#) that it would deny Medicaid funding to the WHP because of a new Texas law banning participation in the program by contractors such as Planned Parenthood "that perform or promote elective abortions or affiliate with entities that perform or promote elective abortions."

Under that law, reported LifeNews, "[Texas yanked about \\$64 million](#) in funding from Planned Parenthood and directed the funds to agencies that do not do abortions. In conjunction with that, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission submitted a request to the Center for Medicaid ... to continue its family planning program without funding Planned Parenthood or other abortion agencies."

The Obama administration denied that request, with Cindy Mann, director of the federal Center for Medicaid, explaining to the *Texas Tribune*: "We want to be very clear [that] Medicaid does not pay for abortions and will not pay for abortions. We indicated to the state [that] their proposal violates the longstanding law."

Mann said that Medicaid funding would not be cut to WHP until March in order to allow the state to rethink its decision. "We're very much interested in continuing discussions with them on having a longstanding renewal of the family planning demonstration program," she told the *Tribune*. "...The issue here is not whether Medicaid funding is involved, but whether the state can restrict access to a qualified health provider simply because they provide other services Medicaid doesn't pay for."

Proponents of denying federal funds to Planned Parenthood note that even though such funding cannot directly cover abortion, because it is fungible the federal dollars that pay for non-abortion procedures free up other money that allows Planned Parenthood to expand its profitable abortion business.

Allison Castle, a spokeswoman for Governor Rick Perry, said that "the Obama administration is trying to force Texas to violate our own state laws or they will end a program that provides preventative health



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care to more than 100,000 Texas women. This boils down to the rule of law — which the state of Texas respects and the Obama administration does not.”

She added, “Texas law prevents taxpayer dollars from going to abortion clinic providers. Under Medicaid, it states who qualified providers are. This isn’t a debate on a specific provider; it’s a debate on rule of law.”

Stephanie Goodman, a spokeswoman for Texas Health and Human Services, explained: “Under federal law, states administer Medicaid and have the right to set the criteria for providers in the program. That is what Texas is doing.” She noted that “we have a state law that our Attorney General says is constitutional, and it clearly bans abortion providers from taking part in the Women’s Health Program. We can’t violate a perfectly valid state law just to appease Washington. We hope [the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] will reverse its position and allow the program to continue.”

Predictably, Planned Parenthood slammed the new Texas rule, which will go into effect on March 14. “No one’s politics should interfere with a woman’s access to health care,” said Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast President and CEO Peter Durkin, whose group profited from the thousands of abortions it performed in the state in 2011. “It is shameful that Governor Perry and Commissioner [Thomas] Suehs continue to politicize lifesaving breast cancer screenings and birth control access for low-income women.”

But pro-life groups pointed out that the services provided by the WHP could be provided by other groups that do not profit from abortion. “The legislature has spoken,” said Kyleen Wright, president of the [Texas for Life Coalition](#). “The Attorney General has said it is constitutional. The Commissioner has signed the rule. If Planned Parenthood cared as much about affordable health care for women as they say, they would get out of the way so that the program could continue.”

Joe Pojman of [Texas Alliance for Life](#) told LifeNews that by blocking Medicaid funding for the WHP, “the Obama administration is showing it would sooner deny tens of millions of dollars of medical services to low-income women rather than allow the State of Texas to cut off tax funding to Planned Parenthood.”

And Elizabeth Graham of [Texas Right to Life](#) told LifeNews that the Obama administration “is adhering to its pro-abortion agenda by playing politics with women’s health. Over 300 clean health care agencies are available to provide family planning services across Texas, but the Obama administration wants to keep taxpayer funds flowing to abortion providers at all costs, which exploits and jeopardizes the health of women.”

With Texas’s refusal to bow to the Obama administration’s threats has come the closure of at least a dozen Planned Parenthood offices in the state, including [one in Odessa](#), which does not perform abortions, but which refers to clinics that do. Tony Perkins of the [Family Research Council](#) pointed out that “despite what Planned Parenthood says about segregated funds and the prohibitions on financing abortions, our tax dollars are what keeps these clinics afloat. Without them, Planned Parenthood withers on the vine.”



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