

The Big Lie? Tax Dollars and Abortions Up for Planned Parenthood

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America came out with its 2011 annual report this week and unlike many struggling organizations in this battered economy, its numbers are trending upward and it is doing quite well, thank you.

According to Planned Parenthood, its affiliated clinics performed 333,964 abortions in 2011, up 4,519 from 2010, while only referring 2,300 women (or 0.08 percent) of the women who walked through their doors to adoption services. But more incredulously, Planned Parenthood received an all-time high \$542 million in taxpayer funding from the government in 2011, more than double than the \$203 million it received just 10 years earlier, in 2001.

The publishing of Planned Parenthood's report has raised the inevitable questions: As Catholics, are our tax dollars being used to fund abortions? Has the pro-choice movement found a loophole through Planned Parenthood channels to get around the Hyde Amendment?

Things definitely smell a bit fishy, but these are questions for which it seems there are no easy answers. However, they require the attention of us as Catholics who embrace the sanctity of life.

It's important to note that in 1976, Congress passed the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal tax dollars to fund abortions. It has since been amended several times by Congress, including most recently in the early 1990s, to expand the categories for which Medicaid funding can be used to fund abortions to include incest and rape.

Representatives from Planned Parenthood and other "reproductive" advocates defend the bloated federal funding it receives, saying none of it goes toward abortions, but rather for preventative and health-care services such as

contraception, pre-natal care, cancer screenings and sex education, among others. But it can be easily argued that abortion is the most – if not one of the most—expensive services offered by Planned Parenthood.

So, if none of the \$542 million it receives from the government is providing financial assistance for abortions, from where is the funding coming to support the killing of 335,000 innocents?

Conservative members of Congress are once again calling for defunding of Planned Parenthood and some in Congress and the media have suggested a congressional audit and investigation is in order. If there is nothing for Planned Parenthood to hide, why should it not take the opportunity to put the issue to rest for good? Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards bristles at such suggestions, calling them attacks on the organization's efforts to provide access to health-care services for women.

Going back to the funding issue, Planned Parenthood is like many organizations in that it receives financial support from other companies. It was a few years ago that I became aware that Starbucks contributes to Planned Parenthood. I haven't had a cup of coffee there since. In addition to saving tons of cash by not spending a ridiculous \$7 for a cup of coffee at Starbucks, I feel a sense of satisfaction every time I walk by or drive past one of its shops, knowing that I am making a choice not to give money to a company that supports a culture of death.

It may not be feasible or even practical for you or me to boycott or not patronize every company that donates funds to Planned Parenthood, primarily because the list is staggering. A list can be easily obtained by conducting an Internet search. You will be surprised at some of the names you see.

But at the very least, being armed with the knowledge of knowing which companies contribute to Planned Parenthood empowers you and I to make decisions about how we spend our money.

And, if you're looking to contribute to a charity that supports life, the Gabriel Network empowers women who are in crisis pregnancy situations to embrace motherhood and choose life by providing housing, education and other resources.

You can donate at www.gabrielnetwork.org.

Let's continue to pray for the conversion of hearts for Planned Parenthood employees and supporters, our elected officials and pregnant mothers who may be confused, alone or afraid and as a result contemplating abortion, that choosing life or death will prevail. May our Lord continue to fortify and bless us as Catholics as we support life in all its forms, from conception until natural death.