

# Court keeps Medicaid block on Planned Parenthood clinics

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Pro-life Arkansans had more to be thankful for this Thanksgiving as the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request Nov. 13 to revisit a three-judge panel decision to stop Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood.

“We were very happy with it. Our state is one of the few that has really been able to successfully stop the funding of Planned Parenthood, getting tax dollars,” said Rose Mimms, executive director of Arkansas Right to Life, a nonprofit that advocates for the unborn. “Our state is a pro-life state.”

The court released a two-page ruling, which did not explain why the rehearing was denied, according a Nov. 14 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette article.

Arkansas Right to Life has tried to ensure throughout the years not only the end to abortion in the state, but that no tax dollars go toward abortions. Critics argue that Medicaid money given to Planned Parenthood does not go toward abortions according to state law. However, other health services, like cancer screenings and sexually transmitted infection (STI) screenings can be done at free or low-cost community clinics and county health departments. There are also about 40 crisis pregnancy resource centers throughout the state that often offer STI testing and other health services.

“It just frees up money that they would have spent in other ways by getting those tax dollars. They say they don’t use that money for abortions and that may actually have some sliver of truth, but what we do know is they target these poor women. They want them to come to

Planned Parenthood because they'll come when they're pregnant and are sold in abortion," Mimms said.

In August, a three-judge panel vacated U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker's declared orders in 2015 and 2016 for the state to continue to fund Planned Parenthood clinics in Little Rock and Fayetteville when three women sued the Arkansas Department of Human Services. The decision stemmed from Gov. Asa Hutchinson's order in 2015 to stop funding Planned Parenthood through Medicaid. Hutchinson cited "unethical" practices by the abortion provider when highly publicized undercover videos were released of Planned Parenthood in another state profiting from aborted fetal tissue. Planned Parenthood denied the practices and those who obtained the videos were indicted on tampering charges in Texas.

"When the governor issued the letter to them that he was going to suspend their ability to get reimbursed for Medicaid dollars we weren't sure that was going to happen or not. There's only about five or six governors who took that action when those videos became public" and some rescinded their request, Mimms said, adding she gives credit Attorney General Leslie Rutledge "for not stepping aside or giving up; she kept at it."

According the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, the plaintiffs are considering a possible appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court or other options in lower courts. It is unknown when exactly Planned Parenthood will officially stop receiving Medicaid funding.

Though Planned Parenthood claims to advocate for women's health, Mimms said that "lie" is confirmed by a woman who showed up to their Arkansas Right to Life office in Little Rock last year, which is down the road from Planned Parenthood.

The woman initially went to Planned Parenthood for help, but did not want to abort her child.

"They gave her every reason under the sun why she didn't need that baby," Mimms said because the woman had other children. "I was so grateful and thankful to God that someone told her to come down" to the ARTL office.

Mimms drove her to Birthright, a pro-life nonprofit, who confirmed her pregnancy. She received help from Caring Hearts Pregnancy Center in North Little Rock and is now in a stable living situation and "is a great mom," Mimms said.

"Here is a poor woman who really wanted that baby ... all they could offer her was an abortion. Yet the pro-life movement, the crisis pregnancy center, they offered her life and help for her situation. It's just night and day difference, death and life," Mimms said.