

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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SISTER JOAN EXPLAINS IT ALL IN 85 WORDS

Here we go again. Texas Senator -- and presidential hopeful -- Ted Cruz and a band of House Republicans are threatening to shut down the government over Planned Parenthood. This past Wednesday, [Politico](#) reported:



In a Wednesday interview, Cruz said the GOP should go as hard as it can to block funding for Planned Parenthood, including the same strategy he tried to use to defund Obamacare in 2013: force the

issue by blocking funding in a government spending bill that must pass by Sept. 30.

Over on the House side of the Capitol, South Carolina Rep. Mick Mulvaney (pictured below) said dozens of House Republicans will back *his* effort to oppose any spending bill — whether a continuing resolution, stopgap or longer-term funding package — that includes any money for Planned Parenthood. The current outrage over any further funding for the nearly 100-year old birth control organization stems from release of a secretly recorded video showing Deborah Nucatola, the senior director of medical services at P.P. discussing the procurement of fetal tissues when conducting abortions. The edited video, released July 14 by an anti-abortion group called the [Center for Medical Progress](#), leaves the impression that Nucatola is talking about Planned Parenthood affiliates making money from fetal tissue. But the edited video ignores other things Nucatola said that contradict that idea.



(Without getting into a full-blown essay on the video and medical ethics, suffice it to say that what PP is doing is both legal and standard operating procedure in the world of medical research. Tissues from fetuses have been used since the 1930s for a variety of purposes. Perhaps most famously, the [1954 Nobel Prize in medicine](#) was awarded to researchers who managed to grow polio vaccine in fetal kidney cell cultures. In order for fetal tissues to be used, the women undergoing an abortion must first sign an informed consent document, stating that she is fully aware of -- and freely agrees -- to the donation. For a full discussion, you might want to check out Factcheck.org's piece, "[Unpinning the Planned Parenthood Video](#).")

What concerns us here is *not* what Planned Parenthood is accused of doing -- making a profit off of fetal tissue -- but rather the threat leveled by Senator Cruz *et al* to crash the government if Planned Parenthood continues receiving so much as a farthing of federal support. Jeez Louise! You're like petulant children continually threatening to hold your breath and run out into traffic if you don't get your way.

Remember the last time you shut down the government Senator Cruz? It was over funding for Obamacare. Now, while that campaign may have temporarily put your name and image up on a neon-lit marquee for all Tea Partiers to swoon over, it also branded you and your posse as being both dangerous and well out of the political mainstream -- at least in the eyes of all those who aren't, for the most part, religious white Christians. *(It should be noted here that after your threat became reality, you argued that it wasn't you, but rather President Obama and then-Majority Leader Harry Red who were responsible for the shutdown!)* If your current threat to shut down the government is merely a ploy to guarantee you a spot on the presidential debate stage this coming Thursday, one is forced to ask "What price glory?"

Be honest Senator Cruz: Are you and the posse you seek to lead so sanguine, so irrevocably convinced that funding for Planned Parenthood is such a major, major sin that you are really, truly willing to deny hundreds of thousands of government workers -- not to mention tens of millions of senior citizens, soldiers, sailors and contractors -- their checks? You can claim -- like you did back in [October 2013](#) -- that the shutdown is "God's will -- that you are merely a soldier in the Lord's army defending the "pre-born"; that your actions are the embodiment of what it means to be "pro-life."

Phooey!

You are your ilk are not "pro-life"; you are very the antithesis of what it means to be pro-life. You, sir -- and your holier-than-thou followers -- are hypocrites.

How is this possible? How can I call Cruz, Mulvaney, Huckabee, Carson and their ilk hypocrites? By way of responding, permit me to introduce [Sister Joan Chittister](#), a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pa., who happens to be one of the most important religious and social leaders of our time. Sister Joan can explain it all in a mere 85 words:



Sister Joan

"I do not believe that just because you're opposed to abortion, that that makes you pro-life. In fact, I think in many cases, your

morality is deeply lacking if all you want is a child born but not a child fed, not a child educated, not a child housed. And why would I think that you don't? Because you don't want any tax money to go there. That's not pro-life. That's pro-birth. We need a much broader conversation on what the morality of pro-life is."

This coming Thursday, 10 Republican hopefuls will gather together on stage at the Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland for the first of god knows how many presidential "debates." I for one would encourage one of the three Fox moderators -- *Special Report* anchor Bret Baier, *The Kelly File* anchor Megan Kelly and *Fox News Sunday* host Chris Wallace -- to ask the 10 candidates, to shut their eyes and then, by a show of hands, indicate whether they are in favor of shutting down the government if Planned Parenthood is not defunded. Wouldn't that be instructive!

Although I sincerely doubt that this "raise-your-hand" scenario will occur, we do know that several of the "anointed 10" have already come out in favor of shutting down the government over this issue. All I can say is to them is "*You already lost most of the LGBT-community vote, as well as African Americans, Hispanics, students and huge percentage of seniors . . . and now you you're going to lose even more of the women's vote. . . . And at a time when whoever your candidate winds up being, is likely going to be squaring off against none other than Hillary Clinton. Are you out of your political minds? Don't you realize that you've pretty much handed the 2016 presidential election to the Democrats?*"

While you ponder the answer to that one, you might also want to ponder the difference between being "pro-life" and "pro-birth.

If you need help, go back to Sister Joan; she explains it all in a mere 85 words.

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