

Despite Barbaric Videos, Most Americans OK Planned Parenthood Funding

Americans broadly support providing federal funding for free women's health exams, screenings and contraception services, a Reuters/Ipsos poll has found, suggesting that Republicans could be in risky territory if they continue criticizing Planned Parenthood as a key part of 2016 campaigns.

Support for federal funding of Planned Parenthood itself to provide those women's health services was even stronger, according to the Reuters/Ipsos released on Wednesday.

The nonprofit's image has taken a hit, the poll found, after an anti-abortion group earlier this year began releasing videos purporting to show Planned Parenthood officials negotiating prices for aborted fetal tissue.

Of the participants who had seen the videos, 44 percent said their views toward Planned Parenthood had become more negative.

Still, the strong support for federal funds to help Planned Parenthood provide screenings, pregnancy tests and prenatal services indicates Republican presidential candidates should tread carefully addressing the issue on the campaign trail.

"We have so many young people having babies when they're babies themselves, and if they can get some kind of birth control or help or education, anything to stop that trend would be very good," said Renee Harrison, 57, of Waldo, Wisconsin.

Harrison said she is a Republican but was not happy with the party's stance on Planned Parenthood. "I may have to not vote

Republican," she said.

Planned Parenthood, which provides health services to millions of women at hundreds of centers nationwide, came under a storm of criticism after the videos were released by an activist group called the Center for Medical Progress.

Planned Parenthood has denied wrongdoing. It says abortions make up just 3 percent of its work.

Planned Parenthood and the Center for Medical Progress did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the poll.

Republicans in the U.S. Senate brought up legislation earlier this month to cut off the more than \$500 million in federal funds Planned Parenthood receives each year. That money cannot be used for abortions.

Democrats sided with the nonprofit and the measure failed. But many conservatives want to keep pressing the issue, with support from some candidates seeking the Republican presidential nomination in 2016.

Republicans want to appeal to primary voters by criticizing what they see as bad behavior, without driving moderates toward the Democratic nominee in the November 2016 election.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll shows they should be cautious on women's health issues.

Seventy-three percent of respondents said they supported federal funding for an unnamed group to provide women's health exams, 69 percent backed federal dollars for prenatal services, and 59 percent were in favor of it for contraception.

When the question was asked a different way, more participants said they backed federal dollars for Planned Parenthood specifically to provide those services.

Democrats and Republicans supported federal funding for the services, even when Planned Parenthood was named.

Overall, 54 percent of those in the poll supported federal funding of Planned Parenthood, and 26 percent opposed it.

“They provide a lot of services for people that otherwise wouldn’t be able to have them,” said Carol Brooks, 62, of Anderson, South Carolina. She said she was deciding between former Texas Governor Rick Perry and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson for president.

Others reacted differently. Forty-four percent of respondents who saw the Center for Medical Progress videos said they now have a more negative view of Planned Parenthood, compared with 34 percent who said their views were unchanged.

After the videos were described to poll respondents, 39 percent said Planned Parenthood should not receive government funding and 34 percent said federal dollars should continue.

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