

Pro-Life Teacher Fired for Opposing Planned Parenthood

On Monday, the school board for the Portland Public School District (PPS) in Oregon voted to terminate the teaching contract of Bill Diss, a teacher who has been an outspoken opponent of Planned Parenthood.

Diss experienced censure in his teaching career beginning in 2007, when he publicly opposed the building of a new Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in downtown Portland. The current action follows Diss' opposition to being forced to facilitate presenters from the Teen Outreach Program (TOP), a program administered by Planned Parenthood, coming into his tutorial session to recruit students.

"Bill Diss is a well-qualified teacher with a track record of success," states Dana Cody, president and executive director of Life Legal Defense Foundation (LLDF). "As the circumstances surrounding this termination demonstrate, Mr. Diss has done nothing that would merit being fired from his job. LLDF will pursue every possible avenue in defending Mr. Diss' rights in this matter and hopes to see his rights ultimately protected despite PPS' actions."

Diss has taught technology, math, computers and electronics at Benson High School since 2002. He has also taught several classes at the community college level. He is highly regarded in his abilities and his success, both by students, by their parents and by fellow teachers.

Diss is the only teacher in the state of Oregon who has been certified to teach college-level computer science to high school students for dual credit. His initiative and hard work have attracted outside grants to Benson High School, opening up even greater opportunities for Benson students.

For the first five years at Benson High, Diss was rated as proficient or better—with numerous positive compliments—in his reviews. His methodology and teaching style have remained substantially the same in all his years of teaching.

The positive reviews took a dramatic change for the worse, however, when Diss began to speak out in opposition to the building of a new Planned Parenthood facility in downtown Portland. Diss was involved in opposition activities on his own time and did not bring his political or religious convictions into his instruction in the classroom.

Nonetheless, he began to experience complaints about his political activities from school administrators, and his teaching came under sudden, rigorous scrutiny. Complaints, negative evaluations, letters of reprimand and formal meetings became a regular part of Diss' life at the school for as long as he engaged in outspoken, public opposition to Planned Parenthood.

Shortly after the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, presenters with the Teen Outreach Program (TOP) came to Diss' tutorial classes to give a presentation recruiting students for the TOP program. When the presenters entered the tutorial, Diss, consistent with district policy, asked for identification. He was handed a card that identified the presenters as employees of Planned Parenthood. This knowledge surprised Diss and caused him serious emotional distress, due to his well-known personal religious convictions and his years of work to oppose that organization.

Diss expressed his dilemma to Benson Principal Carol Campbell at the time and asked to be excused from being present for the presentation due to his religious convictions. His request was denied. He was told he would be required to be present for the TOP presentation. Through the remainder of the school year during which he taught, Diss continued to have to deal with Planned Parenthood staff as they administered the TOP program.

Simultaneous to his request not to be involved with TOP, Diss' teaching came under renewed censorial review. Diss accepted input from the school administration, but the year proved to be extremely stressful, including numerous classroom observations and meetings with school administration.

On March 19, school administrators summarily demanded that Diss leave the school premises and not return, placing him on paid administrative leave. Diss was escorted off the premises by a police officer. This unnecessary show of force is symbolic of the animus faced by Diss throughout the year.