

You Won't Believe Who Just Joined Planned Parenthood

The Planned Parenthood Association of Utah's fight to maintain its federally funded programs in the state will be spearheaded in part by Kate Kelly, the attorney who led a push for female ordination in the LDS Church.

Kelly will join the staff of the Utah family-planning organization Monday as strategic advocacy and policy counsel—a new position created, Kelly said, as part of the group's "aggressive response" to Utah Gov. Gary Herbert ordering state agencies to stop distributing federal funds to Planned Parenthood. An outreach coordinator was also hired.

Herbert's Aug. 14 decree is what spurred Kelly to apply to Planned Parenthood after spending the past year in Kenya, arguing for legislation to provide emergency birth control and access to abortion for victims of sexual assault in Somalia.

"It made it concrete in my mind that women of Utah need to stand up for reproductive rights," Kelly said. "I think what Gov. Herbert did negatively affects women in Utah, his constituents and particularly low-income women of color who access services of Planned Parenthood."

The issue strikes a personal chord for Kelly, who said she used Planned Parenthood services for "years and years."

The Utah chapter of the national organization provides "access to adequate and necessary health care, which is really essential to the fight for gender justice and women's rights," she said.

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, Utah's Planned Parenthood received about \$272,000 in federal funding that went to sexually transmitted disease (STD) testing and

reporting, abstinence education, and to a program that provides pregnancy tests and STD screenings to victims of rape and sexual assault.

The governor's order came in response to the release of videos recorded secretly by a national anti-abortion group. The footage shows Planned Parenthood officials in Houston describing how they provide fetal tissue from abortions for medical research.

Kelly's legal strategy to reverse Herbert's order, she said, is "still under consideration." In the meantime, she is helping to organize a Sept. 29 event at the Utah Capitol, where dozens of people will deliver cards urging the governor to rethink his decision.

A main focus of Kelly's legal career, she said, is reproductive rights, so the job is "kind of like a serendipitous opportunity to use my skills."

She decided to apply for the Planned Parenthood job, she said, after seeing it advertised online when she returned to the U.S. for her job with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Kelly founded Ordain Women in 2013 in a push for women to be allowed to join the priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She stepped down from Ordain Women's board in July, about a year after being excommunicated from the church.

On Wednesday, Kelly praised the Mormon church's stance on abortion, calling it a progressive one that permits women to have abortions if they or their fetus face certain health risks, or in cases of rape.