

# Playing politics with Texans' health care

**M**uch appreciation to Dr. Iliana Neumann and Ashley Bean Thornton for their recent Waco Tribune-Herald columns voicing support for the important health-care services provided by Planned Parenthood, especially for uninsured and low-income Texans.

Dr. Neumann is a compassionate, caring physician at Waco's Family Health Center. Ashley Bean Thornton devotes much of her time working to build a better Waco community, one that's equitable for all. Both of these highly respected, incredibly knowledgeable, fearless women are in the trenches daily and know firsthand that access to affordable, high-quality health care simply isn't available to a large percentage of women in our community. The number of women dying of breast and cervical cancer in McLennan County exceeds both state and national averages.

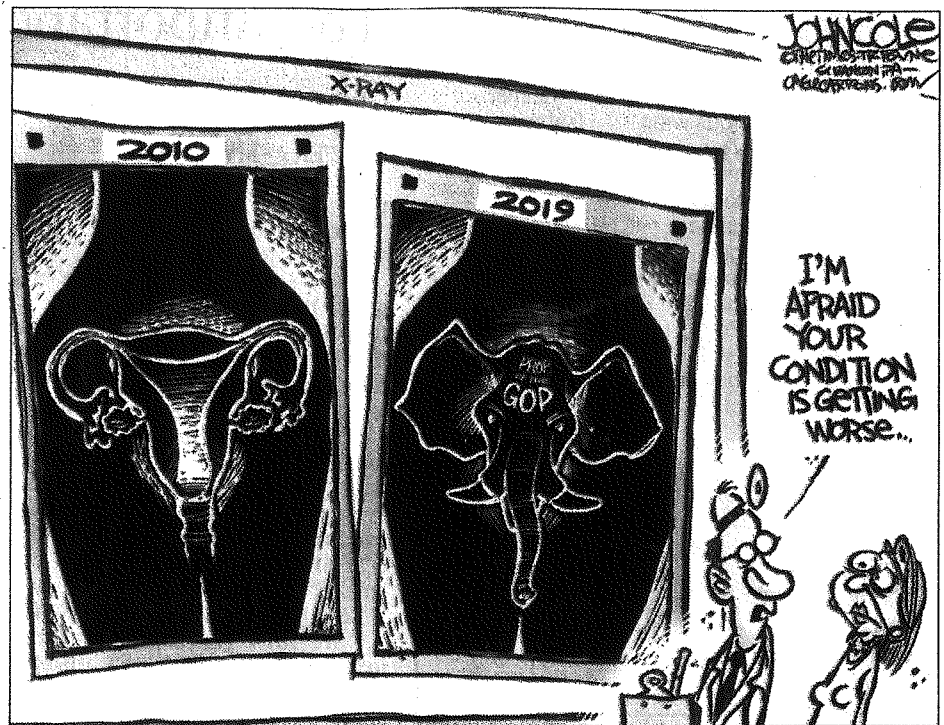


**LaRAINE  
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Guest  
columnist

Eighteen percent of McLennan County residents are without health insurance, compared to the 9 percent national rate. McLennan County faces a teen birth rate nearly twice the national average. The maternal mortality rate in Texas is one of the highest in our country and much higher than many developing countries. More than half of pregnancies in Texas are unintended. This number continues to climb because Texas politicians continue to target safe, legal abortion *and* family planning services.

Texans now have reduced access to birth control, one of the most effective strategies for preventing the need for abortion, because the health-care safety net for low-income women was dismantled in 2011 to meet the political goal of defunding Planned Parenthood's family-planning health centers. Since then, Texas has failed to reach the number of women served before Planned Parenthood was banned from participating. The state's Healthy Texas Women program, in theory, should help resolve these poor health outcomes. After all, there are more than 100 physicians and clinics within five miles of the 76701 zip code listed on the HTW website.



Yet according to Texas Health and Human Services, the number of women actually served in Texas has decreased dramatically, from 115,226 in 2011 to a dismal 70,336 in 2016. How can this be? It's because the program was built for political purposes instead of designed to meet public health goals. Nearly half of the "providers" listed as a resource served ZERO women in the Healthy Texas Women's program last year. Texas replaced Planned Parenthood, a trusted health-care provider that served a high volume of patients effectively and efficiently, with hundreds of listings of MDs who serve few or no patients at all through the Healthy Texas Women program.

Anti-Planned Parenthood lobbyists this legislative session have pushed hard to pass a sweeping new bill (SB 22/HB 1929) that completely undermines health care in Texas communities and would ban local health departments from partnering with Planned Parenthood and other health-care providers. This new state mandate would continue to put the health of Texans at risk.

SB 22/HB 1929 is yet another attempt by

Texas legislators to eliminate access to care at Planned Parenthood health centers by barring them from having any interactions with local governments. This legislation could block people from accessing care such as cancer screenings, birth control, HIV and STI testing and other preventive and essential care at Planned Parenthood health centers.

Dr. Iliana Neumann and Ashley Bean Thornton know all too well that excluding expert, trusted family-planning providers like Planned Parenthood from women's health programs undermines any efforts to expand access to family-planning services and causes unnecessary harm to women, their families and the state.

As a longtime Waco resident, a mother and a Planned Parenthood board member, I ask Texas politicians to stop playing politics with women's health care. Women in McLennan County are the ones who pay the price with their health and their lives.

**LaRaine DuPuy is board vice chair of Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, board chair of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services and an elder of First Presbyterian Church.**