

Labrador may be sincere but he's sincerely wrong

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

No one doubts Congressman Raul Labrador's moral revulsion at seeing videos of Planned Parenthood executives apparently negotiating the sale of body parts from aborted fetuses.

Whether he's been hookwinked by videos so heavily edited to misrepresent the organization is beside the point.

The problem is not Labrador's reaction.

The problem is Labrador's remedy.

Along with 30 of his fellow House Freedom Caucus members, Labrador has threatened to oppose any spending bill that keeps the federal government open for business after the end of this month unless Planned Parenthood's federal funds are cut off.

"Please know that we cannot and will not support any funding resolution - an appropriations bill, an omnibus package, a continuing resolution or otherwise - that contains any funding for Planned Parenthood, including mandatory funding streams," reads the caucus' letter to House Speaker John Boehner.

Noticeably missing from the list of Labrador's allies is any female member of the House - or any of Labrador's colleagues from the Gem State or any of the states surrounding Idaho.

With good reason.

Labrador's target is Planned Parenthood's abortion services. But not one dime of the estimated \$529 million Planned Parenthood gets in federal funds is spent on providing abortions. Federal law prohibits it.

Instead, the taxpayer pays Planned Parenthood to provide health care services - contraception, HIV testing, pregnancy testing and health care for women and men - generally for lower-income people.

Granted, Labrador is not trying to shut down these services. He says that money would be used to procure health care from another vendor. In the process, however, he's willing to tolerate enormous disruption in the lives of people who rely on Planned Parenthood.

Ironically, even here his aim is off. Labrador's Idaho seatmate, Congressman Mike Simpson, told the Post Register a large part of Planned Parenthood's money comes from Medicaid - which would be unscathed regardless of what happens with an appropriations bill.

It won't get that far.

First, Labrador requires a majority of the Republican House.

Next, he'll need more than 60 Senate votes to stop Democrats from filibustering the measure. Assuming his approach breached that unlikely threshold, President Obama would be waiting with a veto stamp. Then Labrador and his House allies must convince two-thirds of the Senate to override Obama's veto.

The math alone tells you where this is heading. If the House is unwilling to pass a budget with Planned Parenthood in it - and the Senate is unwilling to pass one without Planned Parenthood - you have gridlock and another government shutdown.

Which is the last thing you want at a time when the U.S. financial markets are struggling with uncertainty in China, collapsing oil prices and the prospect of rising interest rates.

Idaho depends on that federal lifeline to keep its economy rolling.

None of that seemed to bother Labrador in the fall of 2013, when he helped orchestrate the government shutdown to force Obama to defund his signature health care reform act.

Neither was he dissuaded from opposing the bipartisan budget deal - worked out between Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Congressman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., late in 2013 - to avoid another round or two of shutdowns.

And earlier this year, Labrador voted to shut down the Department of Homeland Security to protest Obama's use of executive orders to spare an estimated 5 million undocumented immigrants from deportation. His colleague, Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, led 75 Republicans to join ranks with 182 House Democrats to keep the nation's first line of defense against terrorism in business.

At least Labrador was engaged in prominent issues - the federal government's role in health care and whether the president overstepped his constitutional authority.

Here he's talking about shutting down the government over a small slice of the \$3 trillion federal budget - without stopping one abortion.

What's next?

Will Labrador resort to this tactic to protest same-sex marriage?

Light rail in Puget Sound?

Mandatory bicycle paths in Boise?

Whatever the justification to seek the next standoff, do you get the feeling Labrador will find one? - M.T.

