

Case Number 1975.0

## Social Media and the Planned Parenthood/ Susan G. Komen for the Cure Controversy

In the early afternoon of Tuesday, January 31, 2012, The Associated Press released what would soon become a major news story, writing: “The nation’s leading breast-cancer charity, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, is halting its partnerships with Planned Parenthood affiliates creating a bitter rift, linked to the abortion debate, between two iconic organizations that have assisted millions of women. The change will mean a cutoff of hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants, mainly for breast exams.”<sup>1</sup> The article cited “newly adopted criteria barring grants to organizations that are under investigation by local, state or federal authorities” and referenced a congressional investigation of Planned Parenthood as the key reason for the change. Planned Parenthood accused Susan G. Komen for the Cure of “bowing to pressure from anti-abortion activists.” Planned Parenthood’s president, Cecile Richards, told The Associated Press, “It’s hard to understand how an organization with whom we share a mission of saving women’s lives could have bowed to this kind of bullying. It’s really hurtful.”<sup>2</sup> Over the next four days the controversy roiled the nation, drawing politicians, activists, the press and supporters of both organizations into a painful battle that pitted one venerable women’s health organization against another.

### Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Planned Parenthood), the nation’s largest nonprofit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider and advocacy organization, traced its roots to 1916 when nurse Margaret Sanger defied U.S. Comstock laws—45-year old legislation that made contraception illegal—by opening the country’s first birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>3</sup> Sanger’s dedication to the effort was personal: she believed her mother’s death age fifty was the result of the strain of bearing eighteen pregnancies.<sup>4</sup> In 1923 Sanger opened a

<sup>1</sup> “Planned Parenthood Blames Pro-life ‘Bullying’ After Cancer Charity Cuts Funds,” *The Guardian*, January 31, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/31/planned-parenthood-bullying-cancer-charity>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> “Planned Parenthood Blames Pro-life ‘Bullying’ After Cancer Charity Cuts Funds,” *The Guardian*, January 31, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/31/planned-parenthood-bullying-cancer-charity>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Public Broadcasting Service, *The Pill, People & Events*, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p\\_sanger.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p_sanger.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

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new clinic in Manhattan, which later became Planned Parenthood.<sup>5</sup> Thirteen years later, the ban on contraceptives was declared unconstitutional by the courts and by the 1960s, the American Medical Association legitimized the use of birth control, a term coined by Sanger, as part of accepted medical practice—the same year that Planned Parenthood funded research led to the development of oral pills for contraception. Demand for “the pill” was overwhelming: by 1965, 25% of married women in the U.S. had tried oral contraceptives.<sup>6</sup>

Casting itself as an advocate for women’s reproductive rights, Planned Parenthood began to call for the legalization of abortion. In 1972, after the U.S. Supreme Court announced its landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade* recognizing the constitutional right to privacy and women's right to choose abortion, Planned Parenthood began to offer abortion services. The organization became the standard bearer for abortion rights but Americans were polarized on the highly controversial and emotional issue; the agency soon garnered loyalty from patients and supporters and disdain from conservative activists and opposition groups. Indeed, throughout the 1980s, the organization was subjected to violent protests, including clinic bombings, sidewalk barricades in front of clinics and the murders of doctors and healthcare workers by vocal and well-organized anti-abortion groups.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, Planned Parenthood began to engage in advocacy work and in 1987, actively opposed President Ronald Reagan’s appointment of Judge Robert Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court in response to Bork’s support for overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Planned Parenthood stated that its efforts to block his appointment (undertaken with more than 250 other organizations) marked “the start of a new era of mobilization.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed in 1989, Planned Parenthood officially established its political and advocacy arm, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, to lead public education campaigns and grassroots organizing in support of abortion rights.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1990s, Planned Parenthood lobbied Congress to pass the Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act requiring health insurers to cover contraceptive care in the same way they covered other prescriptions and medical services. In 1998, when health insurers agreed to cover Viagra, a new drug for men created to treat erectile dysfunction, Planned Parenthood launched a campaign to publicize what it described as hypocrisy. In a subsequent victory, a federal judge ruled in 2002 that an employer's exclusion of prescription contraception from its health benefits was illegal sex discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to lobbying, Planned Parenthood organized protests, letter writing campaigns and events to enlist public support. In 2001, for example, Americans sent more than \$600,000 to Planned Parenthood and 30,000

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<sup>5</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> “History & Successes,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

letters to President George W. Bush in response to Planned Parenthood's announcement that Bush had introduced a global gag rule restricting funding for international family planning. Later in the year, thousands of Americans donated their federal tax rebates to Planned Parenthood.<sup>11</sup> In 2003, after President Bush signed into law legislation that criminalized abortions under certain circumstances, Planned Parenthood joined two other organizations in suing the government and the law was struck down when federal district courts determined that it failed to protect women's health, posed an undue burden on a woman's right to choose, and was unconstitutionally vague.<sup>12</sup> In response, Planned Parenthood organized the March for Women's Lives in 2004 in Washington, D.C., the largest pro-choice demonstration in history with more than one million participants.<sup>13</sup>

## Planned Parenthood in 2012

In 2012, Planned Parenthood had more than six million supporters and donors<sup>14</sup> and proudly promoted the fact that one in five American women had visited Planned Parenthood for healthcare at least once in their lifetime.<sup>15</sup> Planned Parenthood described its mission as "promoting a commonsense approach to women's health and well-being, based on respect for each individual's right to make informed, independent decisions about health, sex, and family planning."<sup>16</sup> The organization was comprised of 77 locally governed affiliates across the U.S. that collectively operated just under 800 health centers.<sup>17</sup>

Though Planned Parenthood was well known for its controversial abortion services, the organization noted that 76% of its clients received birth control services and only 3% of all services were for abortions. Planned Parenthood also provided cancer screening services annually (nearly 770,000 Pap tests and 750,000 breast exams) as well as tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The organization's affiliates offered educational programs that reached 1.1 million people annually.

In its 2010 annual report, the organization reported \$970 million in revenues of which 84% was spent on medical services and programs and 16% on administration and fundraising.<sup>18</sup> Though Planned Parenthood did not publish its major donor or corporate sponsor list, supporters that reported donations on their own tax filings

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<sup>11</sup> "History & Successes," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> "History & Successes," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> "History & Successes," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/history-and-successes.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> "Planned Parenthood at a glance," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/planned-parenthood-glance-5552.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> "Who we are," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are-4648.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> "Who we are," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are-4648.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> "Who we are," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are-4648.htm>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Planned Parenthood Federation of America Annual Report, 2009 -2010, [http://issuu.com/actionfund/docs/ppfa\\_financials\\_2010\\_122711\\_web\\_vf?mode=window&viewMode=doublePage](http://issuu.com/actionfund/docs/ppfa_financials_2010_122711_web_vf?mode=window&viewMode=doublePage), accessed November 15, 2012.

included Sol Goldman Investments, Bonanza Oil, CREDO Mobile, Telosa Software, Bank of America and Nike; most donations were less than \$250,000 and only one reached \$1 million.<sup>19</sup>

### Susan G. Komen for the Cure

*As if it were yesterday, I can remember the phone call I received from Suzy one Tuesday afternoon. Her doctor had found a lump in her breast that was not a cyst. He recommended a biopsy. . . I decided to fly home to Peoria. When I got off the plane, my father was waiting there alone with an expression on his face I will never forget. He didn't have to say a word. At the age of 33, Suzy had breast cancer.* —Nancy Goodman Brinker<sup>20</sup>

In 1980, after battling breast cancer for three years, Susan Goodman Komen, a model from Peoria, Illinois, died at the age of thirty-six. Before she died, Komen, extracted a promise from her younger sister, Nancy Brinker, to end the “shame, pain, fear and hopelessness” that a breast cancer diagnosis carried.<sup>21</sup> “Nan,” she said, “. . . let's do something about this. You can find a way to speed up the research. I know you can. . .”<sup>22</sup>

After Komen’s death, Brinker traveled back to her home in Texas and in 1982 founded the nonprofit Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (Komen). Though the organization would eventually grow to become a global leader of the breast cancer movement and what Komen described as “the world’s largest grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activists,” in the 1980s the disease received little public attention; Brinker’s first challenge was raising awareness about breast cancer, which had remained largely out of the press since the mid-1970s, when former First Lady Betty Ford, a breast cancer survivor, went public with her story about battling with and surviving the disease.<sup>23</sup>

In 1983, Brinker created the first Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, a fundraising event in which participants ran or walked 3.1 miles and solicited friends, family and supporters to “sponsor” their participation by making donations to Komen. To promote the event, Komen created a logo of an abstract female runner outlined with a pink ribbon—a color and symbol that would be associated with the organization for the next 30 years.<sup>24</sup> The first event, held in Dallas, drew 800 participants; by 2012, Komen’s races registered more than 1.6 million participants

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<sup>19</sup> “Top Organizations Disclosing Donations to Planned Parenthood, 2012,” Center for Responsive Politics, <http://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/contrib.php?cycle=2012&cmte=Planned%20Parenthood>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> “Susan G. Komen’s Story,” Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/SusanGKomensStory.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> “Nancy G. Brinker,” Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/NancyBrinker.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> “Susan G. Komen’s Story,” Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/SusanGKomensStory.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> “Nancy G. Brinker,” Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/NancyBrinker.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Judith Warner, “Her Sister’s Keeper,” *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

annually in more than 150 cities worldwide.<sup>25</sup> Over 80% of race participants were women, with nearly half reporting household incomes over \$75,000; the majority, 56%, were 35 years of age or older.<sup>26</sup>

In 1991, Komen distributed pink ribbons at the New York City Race for the Cure in 1991 and encouraged participants to wear them.<sup>27</sup> Komen's Strategic Relationships Vice President, Susan Carter Johns, attributed the rapid growth in the popularity and size of the races to that decision, noting that Komen began to recognize breast cancer survivors at the events with pink T-shirts, visors or ribbons indicating how many years had passed since their initial diagnosis. "This inspired incredible hope," said Johns. "You'd see a woman going through chemotherapy next to a woman with 21 ribbons on her visor. This sea of pink—it gave a very visual picture of how many women were affected by breast cancer. That's when it really caught fire."<sup>28</sup>

Beginning in the late 1980s, Brinker successfully drew corporate sponsors to endorse the organization's work by manufacturing pink-colored versions of their products and marketing them to consumers through traditional retail outlets, making Komen the first charity to market breast cancer as a cause to consumers.<sup>29</sup> Other large corporate sponsors, including American Airlines, New Balance and Yoplait yogurt signed on throughout the 1990s, attracted to Komen's commitment to addressing an important—and non-controversial—women's health issue.

George W. and Barbara Bush were early supporters of Brinker's cause and in 2001 President Bush invited Brinker to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Hungary, which, by law, meant she had to resign her seat on Komen's board.<sup>30</sup> She returned to Komen in 2003 but Bush again called her to service in 2007 as Chief of Protocol for the State Department.

In 2007, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, Komen changed its name to Susan G. Komen for the Cure, announcing, "We have realigned our resources, refocused our research efforts and recommitted to finally, once and for all, finish what we started. And because so many millions of people are counting on us, we will invest an additional \$1 billion over the next decade—by 2017—to do exactly that. Without a cure, 1 in 8 women in the U.S. will continue to be diagnosed with breast cancer—a devastating disease with physical, emotional, psychological and financial pain that can last a lifetime."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "International Races," Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/internationalraces.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Susan G. Komen for the Cure, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> "Nancy G. Brinker," Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/NancyBrinker.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> "Our work," Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/OurWork.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

In 2009, President Barack Obama awarded Brinker the country's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for her work with Komen.<sup>32</sup> Later that year, Brinker returned to Komen, this time to serve as CEO. The organization's revenues had declined between 2004 and 2009 and the press speculated that her decision to take on a larger role was driven by her determination to put the organization back on track.<sup>33</sup>

## Komen in 2012

Since its inception, Komen had invested nearly \$2 billion in breast cancer research, education, screening and treatment making it the world's largest source of nonprofit funds dedicated to finding a cure for breast cancer.<sup>34</sup> Komen did not provide direct services or conduct research; rather, the organization relied on its high profile brand image and public enthusiasm for its races and licensed products to raise funds that were in turn granted to health service providers, research centers, academic institutions and other organizations working to cure breast cancer.

Komen placed particular emphasis on funding cancer screening; the organization analyzed communities with the highest breast cancer mortality rates and subsequently designed programs to improve services. For example, Komen provided transportation to low-income women so they could visit their doctors for mammogram exams.<sup>35</sup> Critics, however, decried Komen's "unwavering focus on screening," noting that it came "at the expense of efforts to better investigate environmental causes or more generously fund treatment for poor women."<sup>36</sup> But the organization was committed to screening and engaged Komen's political advocacy arm to lobby lawmakers when it was necessary to advance the organization's cause. In 2009, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent panel of experts in prevention and primary care appointed by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, amended its long-standing recommendation that women be taught breast self-examination techniques and undergo yearly mammograms beginning at age 40, finding little evidence necessitating mammograms before age 50.<sup>37</sup> Brinker, herself a breast cancer survivor, was concerned that the Task Force's guidelines could result in funding cuts for breast cancer screening. "All these fragile people you were able to educate and get them focused on their bodies and show them there's something they can do . . . and then you get something like that clumsy announcement about changing screening procedures. . . To me, it's a crime what's going on here," said Brinker.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Nancy G. Brinker," Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/NancyBrinker.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> "About Us," Susan G. Komen for the Cure website, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/AboutUs.html>, accessed August 28, 2012; and <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/NancyBrinker.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Gina Kolata, "Panel Urges Mammograms at 50, not 40," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/health/17cancer.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/health/17cancer.html?_r=0), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Warner, "Her Sister's Keeper," *More*, <http://www.more.com/news/womens-issues/her-sisters-keeper>, accessed November 15, 2012.

In 2011, Komen reported \$472 million in revenue, of which 57% was derived through its Race for the Cure events and 38% through direct contributions.<sup>39</sup> It spent 19% on screening and treatment, 44% on education and 18% on research; the balance supported administration and fundraising for the organization.<sup>40</sup> Ford Motor Company, Caterpillar, General Mills, Dell Computers, Energizer Batteries, Hallmark, Major League Baseball, Lowe's, Holland America Line, Payless Shoe Source and dozens more corporations were members of Komen's Million Dollar Council, a group whose members each pledged donations of \$1 million annually to the organization.<sup>41</sup> Komen operated internationally, sponsoring races, research and programs in 50 countries.<sup>42</sup> By 2012 the organization supported 124 affiliates.

## Planned Parenthood and Social Media

On February 18, 2011, a bright media spotlight shone on Planned Parenthood when the U.S. House of Representatives voted in favor of the Pence Amendment to Title X,<sup>43</sup> which called for eliminating \$75 million in federal funding for Planned Parenthood.<sup>44</sup> In the weeks leading up to the vote, Planned Parenthood launched what it referred to as "[the] most intense short-term campaign, we have ever run."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, one executive characterized it as the first Planned Parenthood campaign to experiment with channels and approaches outside of "traditional advocacy vehicles."<sup>46</sup>

Planned Parenthood had launched its formal online presence in 2002 and believed that its use of the Internet evolved similarly to that of other large nonprofits: "There was a web space that over time we figured out how to make more interactive and engaging as the user experience has changed and become more interactive," explained Heather Holdridge, Planned Parenthood's Director of Digital Strategy for Advocacy and Fundraising. "Planned

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<sup>39</sup> Susan G. Komen for the Cure 2010-2011 Annual Report, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedFiles/Content/AboutUs/Financial/FY11%20report%20FINAL%20100812.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Susan G. Komen for the Cure 2010-2011 Annual Report, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedFiles/Content/AboutUs/Financial/FY11%20report%20FINAL%20100812.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Susan G. Komen for the Cure 2010-2011 Annual Report, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedFiles/Content/AboutUs/Financial/FY11%20report%20FINAL%20100812.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> "Our Work", Susan G. Komen for the Cure, <http://ww5.komen.org/AboutUs/OurWork.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Public Law 91-572, also known as the Title X Family Planning Program, part of the 1970 Public Health Service Act, was a federal grant program that provided funding for family planning and related preventive health services for low-income and uninsured people.

<sup>44</sup> Sandra Fish, "Planned Parenthood Defunding: Family Planning's Not a GOP Family Value?" *Politics Daily*, February 19, 2011, <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2011/02/19/planned-parenthood-defunding-family-plannings-not-a-gop-family/>, accessed October 22, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Erik Eckholm, "Planned Parenthood Financing Is Caught in Budget Feud," *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/us/politics/18parenthood.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/us/politics/18parenthood.html?_r=0), accessed October 22, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web," *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.



Parenthood has had a strong e-mail presence . . . [that] has historically been the anchor and the main way in which the organization has communicated with our supporters."<sup>47</sup>

While Holdridge noted that Planned Parenthood joined online social spaces such as Facebook (in 2004), YouTube (2005) and Twitter (in 2006), as each site was launched on the Internet, it was not until 2011 that the organization developed an active strategy to leverage the sites. "The fight over the de-funding of the organization caused us to re-think and fundamentally change how we approach the online space," said Holdridge. "It also opened the organization's eyes to the power of social media in terms of . . . the passion of our supporters in speaking out on our behalf and doing it in their own voice."<sup>48</sup> Planned Parenthood's social media staff posted content for supporters to "remix or make their own, or just re-share what was posted by others," said a former staff member.<sup>49</sup>

The campaign resulted in thousands of calls and e-mails to Congress by Planned Parenthood supporters; nevertheless, the amendment passed the House and Planned Parenthood staff geared up for the Senate vote expected in April.<sup>50</sup> "Within moments of the House vote, we had all our messages out through e-mail, social media, YouTube, and even chaperoned e-mails through partners," explained Stephanie Lauf, then Planned Parenthood's Director of Online Supporter Engagement.<sup>51</sup> Another former manager described Planned Parenthood's strategy as one of constant communication, both inside the organization and with supporters. "We needed to be on the phone with each other to work on integration and coordination of the messages across channels. When this was a situation where we were all working 12 hours a day, people didn't want another meeting, but in a crisis you have to get together at least once a day to be sure we were all together," she said.<sup>52</sup>

Gabriela Lazzaro, then Digital Content Manager, said Planned Parenthood focused on maintaining a steady volume of communication: "[But] we were getting tired of our own message. Three of us made a silly video kind of mocking ourselves . . . explaining why this was a drawn out campaign and posted that on social channels. And lots

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<sup>47</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web," Personal Democracy Media, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web," Personal Democracy Media, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.



of people responded. *Salon* even picked it up. We filmed ourselves calling congress to show how easy it really is."<sup>53</sup> In addition to creating content, the organization used search engine optimization to draw people to its website or Facebook page. They also created a website page featuring pictures of supporters—including celebrities—holding “We stand with Planned Parenthood” signs, as well as easy-to-scan information about the issues, news and links to their social media venues.<sup>54</sup>

On April 14, 2011 the Senate voted down the measure. Soon after, Planned Parenthood increased its digital advocacy and fundraising staff: of the organization’s 342 employees in New York and Washington, 40 worked on communications issues, which included 18 whose focus was on social media and other digital projects.<sup>55</sup> Just after the Pence vote, the organization began working to improve its digital advocacy strategy, according to Dawn Laguens, Executive Vice President at Planned Parenthood. She deemed the vote a wake-up call: “We were learning a lot,” said Laguens. “Part of it was, how do you absorb a million new people into your activism? People were coming out of the woodwork.”<sup>56</sup> Though Planned Parenthood’s core demographic had long skewed young and female—18-45 year old women—the organization’s new supporters were technology savvy, which presented both a challenge and an opportunity. “The younger generation has not just a facility with the Internet, but they’re content creators in ways that consistently amaze me,” said Holdridge, who noted that the organization had to be careful to maintain its own professionalism even as it worked to encourage creativity and informality among its supporters. “We have a brand and we have a point of view and we have an expertise that we’re trying to communicate in everything that we do. At the same time, we are trying to reach a constituency who doesn’t necessarily want to be engaged with in a super formal way,” she said.<sup>57</sup>

## Komen v. Planned Parenthood

As the nation’s two largest organizations dedicated to women’s health, Komen and Planned Parenthood had much in common. “We were Planned Parenthood’s ‘sisters’ in the nonprofit world; women were our shared constituency,” said Karen Handel, Komen’s former Senior Vice President for Public Policy.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Komen had been a target of anti-abortion groups since it began providing funding to Planned Parenthood in 2005.<sup>59</sup> Komen

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<sup>53</sup> Amy Sample Ward, “Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012,” *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Amy Sample Ward, “Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons From Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012,” *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonprofittimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Suzanne Perry, “Planned Parenthood’s Social-Media Magic,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Suzanne Perry, “Planned Parenthood’s Social-Media Magic,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web,” *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

earmarked its Planned Parenthood grants to pay for clinical breast exams and mammogram referrals and Planned Parenthood assured Komen that its funds would not be used to pay for controversial abortion services. Nevertheless, pro-life groups criticized Komen, calling for the organization to sever ties with Planned Parenthood.

Komen had been considering whether to end funding to Planned Parenthood as criticism began to intensify in 2011, according to Karen Handel:<sup>60</sup>

Komen was facing boycotts from Catholics, Baptists, and numerous pro-life groups. Corporate sponsors were withdrawing, not wanting to be associated with controversy. Race participants were pulling out. Komen's local affiliates were frustrated, and their fund-raising was being affected. Add to this Komen's own mounting public relations issues and declining revenues, and something had to give. . . [Brinker and Komen president Elizabeth Thompson] . . . wanted Komen out of the middle of the pro-life/abortion debate. It was not our issue. It had become a major distraction, sucking up manpower and putting a damper on fund-raising. We were a breast cancer organization, and we couldn't afford to offend either side.<sup>61</sup>

Two months after the House vote on the Pence Amendment, Komen's board formed a subcommittee to consider Planned Parenthood's funding and concurrently, Komen staff began meeting on the issue. Both the staff review and board subcommittee concluded that funding for Planned Parenthood should continue and left unchanged the \$650,000 in grants it had already made to Planned Parenthood in 2011.<sup>62</sup>

### More Controversy for Planned Parenthood

In September 2011, Representative Cliff Stearns, a Republican from Florida, notified Planned Parenthood that he had initiated a congressional investigation to discover if taxpayer money provided to Planned Parenthood was being used to fund abortion services.<sup>63</sup> Planned Parenthood saw this as a thinly-veiled attempt to continue the effort to de-fund the organization. In response, Planned Parenthood launched a new advocacy campaign on election day that it dubbed Women are Watching. "The . . . campaign is . . . a way for us to talk about women's health as a political issue and honestly, when we were doing the planning for this, it was aspirational that women's health would be an issue in the campaign," said Holdridge. "With a lot of the broader fights that we've had . . . this

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<sup>60</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Washington Post Staff, "Timeline of Key Events in Komen Controversy," *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ_story.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Washington Post Staff, "Timeline of Key Events in Komen Controversy," *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ_story.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

is something that people are paying attention to. So, it is our attempt to highlight candidates who are with us, our champions, and who are not with us, our chumps.”<sup>64</sup>

On November 28, 2011, Komen’s board voted unanimously to change its granting criteria to deny funding eligibility to any organization under formal investigation for financial or administrative improprieties by local, state or federal authorities.<sup>65</sup> An organization could regain its eligibility once the investigation was concluded if the organization and its affiliates were cleared of any wrongdoing.<sup>66</sup> Handel explained Komen’s rationale: “Komen made a rational, reasonable decision: implement a new community granting strategy that would drive better health outcomes for women—and in doing so, move to neutral ground in the culture wars by severing ties with Planned Parenthood.”<sup>67</sup> Handel explained that Planned Parenthood received less than 1% of Komen’s entire grant portfolio, making it a minor grantee; similarly Komen deemed the grant amount “inconsequential” to Planned Parenthood’s work, given Planned Parenthood’s nearly \$1 billion budget.<sup>68</sup>

The next day, Mollie Williams, the Managing Director of Community Health who oversaw Komen’s nearly \$100 million community grant program, resigned.<sup>69</sup> Though she refused to comment specifically on the matter, she later released a statement that read, in part:

The divide between these two very important organizations saddens me. I am hopeful their passionate and courageous leaders, Nancy Brinker and Cecile Richards, can swiftly resolve this conflict in a manner that benefits the women they both serve.<sup>70</sup>

On December 6, 2011, Komen affiliates that were managing local Planned Parenthood grants were told of the decision. Handel described their response as a “mix of relief and anger.”<sup>71</sup> While some affiliates were “comforted to know that this difficult, time-consuming issue would finally be off their plate . . . others objected vehemently in what seemed like an overly emotional response more in support of Planned Parenthood than Komen,” said

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<sup>64</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web,” *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Washington Post Staff, “Timeline of Key Events in Komen Controversy,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ_story.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “An Inside Look at Susan G. Komen for the Cure’s Spin Machine,” *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/02/an-inside-look-at-susan-g-komen-for-the-cures-spin-machine/252488/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>68</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Washington Post Staff, “Timeline of Key Events in Komen Controversy,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ_story.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “Top Susan G. Komen Official Resigned Over Planned Parenthood Cave-In,” *The Atlantic*, February 2, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/02/top-susan-g-komen-official-resigned-over-planned-parenthood-cave-in/252405/>.

<sup>71</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

Handel.<sup>72</sup> On the same date, Komen communications staff members discussed the possible Planned Parenthood responses that Komen might face, including petitions, negative coverage from bloggers, mainstream press and social media, as well as the possibility that Planned Parenthood would enlist supporters to bombard them with calls and e-mails.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the leadership decided the organization would not pursue any proactive media outreach but would have a statement ready that focused on detailing the organization's new granting strategy.<sup>74</sup>

Ten days later, Komen sent "talking points" to its affiliates and though the organization emphasized that they were for internal use only, the affiliates were encouraged to share them with donors and constituents.<sup>75</sup> Later that day, Komen president Elizabeth Thompson called Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards to inform her of the organization's decision.<sup>76</sup> "It was incredibly surprising," Richards said. "It wasn't even a conversation it was an announcement."<sup>77</sup> During the call, Richards expressed concern that Komen's decision would be "media fodder" and noted that Planned Parenthood planned to respond.<sup>78</sup> The two executives agreed to conduct a follow-up call the next week but the next day, Richards, who by then had learned of the talking points document, contacted Komen to express her concern: "She specifically characterized the decision as political and said that our ability to manage any fallout from the decision was compromised when Komen chose to communicate directly with its affiliates before allowing Planned Parenthood to review the materials," wrote Handel in a book about the debacle published nine months later.

Just before Christmas, Richards sent a letter to Brinker and Komen's board chairman to request a meeting with Komen's board of directors. In her letter, Richards wrote that Planned Parenthood considered Komen's actions to be "based on politically motivated investigations where there was no proof of malfeasance."<sup>79</sup> Richards expressed concern that Komen's talking points contained "misleading information . . . that was already shaping the

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<sup>72</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "An Inside Look at Susan G. Komen for the Cure's Spin Machine," *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/02/an-inside-look-at-susan-g-komen-for-the-cures-spin-machine/252488/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Washington Post Staff, "Timeline of Key Events in Komen Controversy," *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/timeline-of-key-events-in-komen-controversy/2012/02/07/gIQAX4EWxQ_story.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> David Crary, "Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood," *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

public narrative.”<sup>80</sup> In early January, Komen officials responded with a brief letter; Richards said the letter ignored the request for a meeting and defended Komen’s new grant criteria.<sup>81</sup>

### **Komen’s Decision Went Public**

On January 8, 2012, the first media report surfaced when the American Family Association announced on its radio broadcast that Komen was cutting Planned Parenthood funding.<sup>82</sup> The broadcast received very little public attention, but on January 30<sup>th</sup>, Komen learned that a major news organization, the Associated Press (AP), was working on a story and Leslie Aun, Vice President of Communications, was contacted for Komen’s comment.<sup>83</sup> Though Komen’s pre-planned strategy was to turn down requests for interviews and instead issue a press statement, Handel claimed that Aun granted the AP reporter an interview and made reference to the talking points sent to the affiliates.<sup>84</sup> “I don’t know why Leslie did the interview,” wrote Handel, “given that Komen’s agreed-upon response had been to issue the statement. I also don’t know why she used the affiliate granting guidelines Q&A for a press interview or why she didn’t get more information and confer with her colleagues.”<sup>85</sup> Aun disputed Handel’s account of the interview. “When the Planned Parenthood decision was made back in early December, I was directed to develop a statement and messaging focusing on the fact that Planned Parenthood was under investigation. Every word of the messaging related to the Planned Parenthood decision was personally approved by Karen. Before speaking with the AP reporter, I made sure to check in with Karen, letting her know that I would be using the messaging that she had OK’d and then I read it nearly verbatim to the reporter. If there were alternative messages I was supposed to deliver, they were not shared with me.”<sup>86</sup>

### **Tuesday, January 31, 2012**

When the AP story was released the next afternoon, Aun was quoted as saying that pressure tactics were not the reason for the funding cutoff; rather, the story cited Stearns’ House investigation as a key factor.<sup>87</sup> Stearns, who had offered the AP reporter his comments the day before, said he was investigating Planned Parenthood for

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<sup>80</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>81</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Abigail Pesta, “Ex-Komen Official Karen Handel Attacks Planned Parenthood ‘Thugs’ in New Book,” *The Daily Beast*, September 5, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/05/former-komen-official-karen-handel-calls-planned-parenthood-a-schoolyard-thug.html>, accessed November 14, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

“possible violations of state and local reporting requirements, as well as allegations of financial abuse.”<sup>88</sup> The reporter noted that the investigation came at the urging of a national anti-abortion group, Americans United for Life, whose report formed the basis of Stearns’ investigation.<sup>89</sup> As with many past governmental investigations, Planned Parenthood said Stearns’ investigation was politically motivated.

The AP reporter interviewed several Planned Parenthood affiliate leaders, including one who said local Komen leaders were frustrated over the national Komen decision. “One of the things these organizations share is the trust of women across the United States,” she said. “. . .we’re concerned about not losing the trust of these women, who turn to both of us at their most difficult moments.”<sup>90</sup>

Immediately after the story was released, Senator Patty Murray (Washington) and Representative Michael Honda (California) issued statements: “At the heart of this issue is the shameful ‘investigation’ of Planned Parenthood by House Republicans trying to score political points and appease their extreme right-wing base. Komen should not allow these sort of partisan games to put women across America at risk,” said Murray.<sup>91</sup> “I am stunned and saddened,” said Honda. “I call on Komen to reconsider this decision, stand strong in the face of political pressure and do the right thing for the health of millions of women everywhere.”<sup>92</sup>

Anti-abortion groups, however, welcomed the news. The Alliance Defense Fund praised Komen “for seeing the contradiction between its lifesaving work and its relationship with an abortionist that has ended millions of lives.”<sup>93</sup>

### ***Planned Parenthood Engaged its Supporters***

Within minutes of the story’s publication, Planned Parenthood responded by tweeting a message to its tens of thousands of Twitter followers: “ALERT: Susan G. Komen caves under anti-choice pressure, ends funding for breast cancer screenings at PP health centers” and included a link to its press release.<sup>94</sup> The posting was re-tweeted 539 times.

A short time later, Planned Parenthood supporters received an e-mail from Cecile Richards. The subject line read “Disappointing news from a friend,” and in the body of the e-mail Richards let supporters know about

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<sup>88</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> United States Senator Patty Murray, News Releases, Senator Murray’s Statement on Komen Foundation’s Planned Parenthood Decision, January 31, 2012, <http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/newsreleases?ID=e17f3451-6c60-4548-8ff1-d85dfc450c79>, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Tweet posted by Planned Parenthood Action Fund, January 31, 2012, 12:52pm, Twitter.com, <http://twitter.com/PPact/status/164451036147355648>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Komen's decision and the impact that it would have on Planned Parenthood (see Exhibit 1 for excerpts). Though the organization had prepared its initial communication in advance of the publication of the AP article—the e-mail, press release, Facebook and Twitter posts—the organization's response was crafted in real time, explained Holdridge:<sup>95</sup>

When our President was notified that [the defunding decision] was happening, it was a shock and we knew that it was at some point going to become public but we didn't know when. So, as far as priming our community, there wasn't any education or communication component in advance. But, our work had been primed through the [February 2011] two-month campaign. Supporters knew what kind of attacks Planned Parenthood was often under, they knew what we really did and what our services were.  
..<sup>96</sup>

Holdridge described the strategy she and her team executed that afternoon:

One, it was announcing and educating supporters that this was happening. As an organization you're not always breaking news but in this case we were. The second piece which...in the advocacy role you say well what can you ask your supporters to do that's meaningful and in this case . . . asking for money made sense because we were trying to replace the funds that were lost. What happened after [that] . . . was completely and utterly unknown to us. We did not have a campaign plan for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. . . We didn't know that a day later we were going to launch a petition. We didn't know that two days later we were going to be working with Mayor Bloomberg in New York and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. We just knew that we had many shared supporters and that some were going to be upset . . . What we found out when we were getting feedback from Facebook from Twitter was that people weren't upset sad, they were upset outraged.<sup>97</sup>

The response was overwhelming and moved so quickly the organization could barely keep up; Planned Parenthood staff had trouble reading and responding to its Facebook messages because the volume was so large.<sup>98</sup> Even so, Holdridge characterized Planned Parenthood's social media team as "responsive and fast" and noted that external supporters were responsible for much of the content creation: "There was a lot of action taken by the

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<sup>95</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Heather Holdridge at #CampaignTech: Planned Parenthood's Response to Komen, Jan/Feb 2012, video posted by Rachel Sklar, <http://vimeo.com/40749129>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>98</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.



community that we didn't prompt. Even though a Tumblr blog [created by a supporter] wasn't our site, we still promoted it because it let people that wanted that action have a place to go and to show that the community was strong and taking action for us."<sup>99</sup>

Planned Parenthood's strategy went beyond soliciting donations. "Your initial reaction is to fill back up the pot when the money is pulled to ensure services don't lag. Within three hours of launching that e-mail, we saw that people were really [upset] and they needed something else to do that wasn't just giving money," said Lauf.<sup>100</sup>

Planned Parenthood maintained a database stocked with stories it had amassed from supporters who described their experiences with the organization. "When the Komen news hit we were able to go into the story bank and pull real stories of women accessing breast health and breast cancer support through Planned Parenthood. It is so important to have those stories from your community ahead of time. If we had had to call around and look for stories, it would have taken days," said a former staff member.<sup>101</sup> Planned Parenthood posted content online, such as those from its story bank, then monitored public response and reaction. "We were reposting and retweeting stuff from our supporters that we thought was a good way to express how we were feeling about this as well. And then giving people things to do: it was action, it was donations to replace the funds that were lost, it was simple Facebook badges . . . at the end of the day, our strategy was to make sure that we were paying attention to what our supporters were saying whether they be grassroots, members of congress or the media and to respond accordingly in a way that accurately reflected what our position and what our voice was in the issue and where we fit in the broader community. At the end of the day yes, it was about us; but it wasn't *just* about us," said Holdridge.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Komen's Response***

In January 2011, Komen had hired The Morris & King Company, a small public relations firm that specialized in social media, including user-generated content, Twitter and online video. Komen's then Chief Marketing Officer said that "an urgency in the marketplace related to healthcare reform, state legislature changes surrounding coverage, and various other shifts exaggerated the need for consistent messaging and communications via PR, social media, and online media relations support. . . . Our capacity to get urgent and relevant information, in real time, to as broad an audience as possible lead to the conclusion that we needed to supplement our work with an agency," she said. "It was important for us to reach out to a broader community with messaging that's innovative

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<sup>99</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Amy Sample Ward, "Stand with Planned Parenthood: Lessons from Crisis Response Campaigns 3-12-2012," *The Non Profit Times*, <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/stand-with-planned-parenthood-lessons-from-crisis-response-campaigns-4462>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>102</sup> Yahoo! Change Your World DC: Social Media Advocacy and Women's Health panel, moderated by Jennifer Preston, posted to Vimeo by Yahoo! Business and Human Rights, <http://vimeo.com/42576169>, accessed November 15, 2012.

and relevant and includes a clear call to action. We needed help to do that.” In addition to Morris & King’s resources, Komen maintained an in-house communications staff of six.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, when the AP story was released, Komen’s social media response was slow. Komen had begun to receive calls from Planned Parenthood supporters the night before the AP story was released and tracked the first tweet about its decision at 8pm.<sup>104</sup> Handel noted that while Katrina McGhee, Komen’s Head of Marketing, said that the Facebook pages of their corporate partners would likely start to receive posts, nobody from Komen was assigned to monitor Facebook.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, according to Handel, the internal staffer responsible for social media was out of the office for the week.<sup>106</sup>

That evening, Komen issued its first public statement to the mainstream press: “While it is regrettable when changes in priorities and policies affect any of our grantees, such as a long-standing partner like Planned Parenthood, we must continue to evolve to best meet the needs of the women we serve and most fully advance our mission.”<sup>107</sup> Handel noted that when considering how to respond, Komen staff were concerned that the AP story focused on “abortion and politics and not on the quality of the grants that Komen wanted to fund.”<sup>108</sup>

### Wednesday, February 1, 2012

When the AP story broke, the front door of Komen’s website and its Facebook page displayed a message announcing that Energizer had joined its Million Dollar Council. Immediately, Energizer received boycott threats on its own Facebook wall.<sup>109</sup> The next day, Komen took down the Energizer message and posted a statement denying that its decision was politically motivated. By February 2<sup>nd</sup> the post garnered over 9,400 comments on both sides of the debate, though pro-Komen comments primarily expressed anti-abortion sentiments and made scant reference to Komen’s articulated rationale for de-funding (see Exhibit 2).<sup>110</sup> Over the course of the day, Komen received over 2,000 complaints but only 46 comments in support of its decision.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Alexandra Bruell, “Komen Names Morris & King its AOR,” PR Week US, January 4, 2011, Factiva, <http://www.factiva.com>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>104</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>105</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>107</sup> David Crary, “Cancer Charity Halts Grants to Planned Parenthood,” *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2012, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed September 13, 2012.

<sup>108</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Samantha Kimmey, “Controversy Engulfs Susan G. Komen for the Cure,” United Press International, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/), accessed November 15, 2012; and Susan G. Komen for the Cure Facebook post, February 1, 2012, 5:52am, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/susankomenfortheCure/posts/10151256882495157>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>111</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

The Komen team discussed ideas for how to manage the organization's messaging and team members proposed ideas such as another formal Facebook posting from Brinker or a "frequently asked questions" posting. They settled on a video to be posted on YouTube (see Exhibit 3 for a transcript of excerpts of the video). When the video, entitled "Straight Talk" and featuring Brinker explaining the Planned Parenthood decision was posted, YouTube's comment function was initially disabled. Later, when commenting was enabled, the video received over 4,800 comments from viewers who were "largely incensed."<sup>112</sup> "It was a complete bust," wrote Handel. "People saw it as contrived and forced."<sup>113</sup> Handel wrote that when it came to social media, Komen was "completely outflanked: Some took Komen to task for not being more prepared and engaged when it came to social media. I would ask everyone to consider that Komen is a breast cancer organization; it is focused on ending breast cancer," she wrote.<sup>114</sup> The video was subsequently removed but not before it was parodied by comedienne Dara Katz the following day and re-posted by several YouTube members.

In the meantime, the press began to report claims that Komen was deleting negative social media posts.<sup>115</sup> Aun said Komen only deleted messages if they contained profanity, but angry Facebook posters complained on Komen's Twitter page and re-posted their messages (see Exhibit 4). A blog on the Komen website was also not working, which Komen officials attributed to "technical reasons."<sup>116</sup>

### ***Planned Parenthood's Response***

Holdridge said Planned Parenthood decided it needed to play several roles for angry supporters: uniting them, giving them regular updates, and offering them "something constructive and meaningful to do," she said. "For us, that was standing with Planned Parenthood, it was not criticizing Komen."<sup>117</sup> Planned Parenthood asked people to sign an "I Stand With Planned Parenthood" open letter that a supporter had drafted. The text was shared more than 99,000 times on Facebook.<sup>118</sup> Within 48 hours, Planned Parenthood had collected 175,000 signatures on the open letter. Holdridge said the online messages were overwhelmingly supportive: "The sentiment online—on Twitter it ran 15 to one in our favor. . . That is what made the difference. It was not that we had an open letter, not that we sent an e-mail out. It was the collective outrage that was channeled in various

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<sup>112</sup> Samantha Kimmey, "Controversy Engulfs Susan G. Komen for the Cure," United Press International, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>113</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Samantha Kimmey, "Controversy Engulfs Susan G. Komen for the Cure," United Press International, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2012/02/03/Controversy-engulfs-Susan-G-Komen-for-the-Cure/WEN-8161328283653/), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>116</sup> Elizabeth Flock, "Susan G. Komen Denies Censoring Message Boards," *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/is-susan-g-komen-deleting-negative-posts-on-facebook-message-boards/2012/02/02/gIQAen2bkQ\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/is-susan-g-komen-deleting-negative-posts-on-facebook-message-boards/2012/02/02/gIQAen2bkQ_blog.html), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>117</sup> Suzanne Perry, "Planned Parenthood's Social-Media Magic," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>118</sup> Suzanne Perry, "Planned Parenthood's Social-Media Magic," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

ways. I would say about 80% of it was people doing their own thing and speaking in their own voice and we amplified where we could,” she said.<sup>119</sup>

One example of Planned Parenthood’s ability to “amplify” was in the publicizing of a blog called *Planned Parenthood Saved Me*. Deanna Zandt, an activist and media technologist, launched the blog on Tumblr, a microblogging platform and social networking website. Zandt came up with the idea while posting to a conversation thread on Facebook with fellow activists. “. . . Our response as individuals to this fiasco around Komen was going to be because we all felt activated by it, we all felt emotionally invested in things like breast cancer and women’s health in general, and all of us felt like there had to be some sort of big response,” said Zandt. She decided to encourage women to share their Planned Parenthood stories online. Zandt quickly created a Tumblr page and posted the link on Planned Parenthood’s Facebook page, asking women whose cancer had been detected by a Planned Parenthood clinic to share their stories.<sup>120</sup>

Zandt chose about twenty women from her contacts list—those who worked on women’s health issues or who were influential, high profile feminists and informed them about the Tumblr page. “This is . . .the dirty secret of advocacy work,” she said. “It’s not just posting once to Twitter and hoping for the best. It’s choosing. . . .I could have tried to send it to somebody at a major media outlet or somebody who has a bajillion followers and hope for the best. But what I chose instead were people that I felt would be influential on the topic so that it would spread faster through networks,” said Zandt.<sup>121</sup>

Zandt launched the site on Wednesday and by Thursday evening, the blog had collected around 300 stories.<sup>122</sup> On the morning of February 3rd, Rachel Maddow read from the blog on her television show, noting “page after page after page of testimonials.”<sup>123</sup> By Saturday, the blog had received 28,000 unique visits and Zandt noted that more than half of them came before any major media mention of the site. “All of the traffic came from Facebook, Twitter and Tumbler. . . We got little bumps [after mainstream media stories] but it didn’t make the site explode. It was women sharing their stories with one another that made the site explode,” she said.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Heather Holdridge at #CampaignTech: Planned Parenthood’s Response to Komen, Jan/Feb 2012, video posted by Rachel Sklar, <http://vimeo.com/40749129>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>120</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web” transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>121</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web” transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>122</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web” transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>123</sup> “Social Conservatives Take War on Planned Parenthood Too Far,” RH Reality Check, February 3, 2012, <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/video/2012/02/03/social-conservatives-take-war-on-planned-parenthood-too-far>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>124</sup> “Planned Parenthood and the Web” transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Holdridge promoted the Tumblr page on Planned Parenthood's Facebook and Twitter pages. She explained the organization's strategy: "So many women started submitting these stories of, 'Planned Parenthood was the only place that I could go after I was assaulted where the people understood me.' . . . I had no idea even what I was doing when I went there for birth control.' . . . Just a myriad of stories about how Planned Parenthood had changed their lives."<sup>125</sup>

Planned Parenthood was selective about promoting those messages that they felt told their story in the way they wanted it to be told, taking advantage of others' "voices" to maintain credibility and distance.<sup>126</sup> "[Zandt] used the term 'saved me' which is not a term I would use or that frankly Planned Parenthood would use. That's a little bit too much for us to go out and ask people to talk about things in that way. It required someone who was not us who was a supporter of us to organize in that way. When we saw this we absolutely promoted it," said Holdridge.<sup>127</sup> Zandt agreed. "I don't think that Planned Parenthood could have said, 'hey, we just started this Tumbler, can you guys all come and say how awesome we are?'" she said.<sup>128</sup>

#### Thursday, February 2, 2012

By Thursday morning, the story had developed into national news. The press reported that Komen's decision to deny investigated nonprofits the ability to apply for funding was a ruse to defund Planned Parenthood. Handel, an avowed pro-life supporter who in 2010, when she was a gubernatorial candidate for Georgia said, "since I am "pro-life, I do not support the mission of Planned Parenthood," was blamed for steering Komen's decision.<sup>129</sup>

But Handel wrote that by the afternoon, she felt that things were beginning to improve. Since the initial story, Komen's donations had doubled from the previous year and increased since the story hit. Komen's number of single-day contributors had increased 200% versus the prior year and donations were up 400%.<sup>130</sup> Komen leaders had reason to believe the tide was turning: positive e-mails had begun to outpace negative emails by a 2 to 1 ratio. McGhee, however, expressed concern that the supporters were largely supporting what they perceived to be an

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<sup>125</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web" transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>126</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web" transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Heather Holdridge at #CampaignTech: Planned Parenthood's Response to Komen, Jan/Feb 2012, video posted by Rachel Sklar, <http://vimeo.com/40749129>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>128</sup> "Planned Parenthood and the Web" transcript, *Personal Democracy Media*, March 29, 2012, <http://personaldemocracy.com/media/planned-parenthood-and-web-how-adapting-networked-age-works-practice/transcript>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> CNN wire staff, "Komen Foundation VP Resigns, Blasts Planned Parenthood," CNN.com, February 7, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/07/us/komen-executive-resigns/index.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>130</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

anti-abortion decision, not Komen's mission.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Komen's Facebook posts were mostly negative or praised Komen for taking an anti-abortion stance (see Exhibit 5).

Although Komen's sponsors were standing by the embattled organization, they were being battered by the social media storm too (see Exhibit 6 for comments by Ford Motors Warriors in Pink customers).

Brinker appeared on NBC and in an interview with reporter Andrea Mitchell, herself a breast cancer survivor and long-time Komen supporter and race participant. In defending Komen's decision to defund Planned Parenthood, Brinker said that the investigation into Planned Parenthood was not the only issue and noted that the grants to Planned Parenthood did not meet the organization's "new standards of criteria for how we can measure our results and effectiveness in communities."<sup>132</sup> Though Mitchell pointed out that Planned Parenthood supporters said the organization was being singled out among Komen's 2,000 grantees, Brinker said, "That's not the issue . . . Our issue is grant excellence. [Planned Parenthood] does pass-through grants with their screening grants. They send people to other facilities. We want to do more direct-service grants." Brinker pointed out that Komen had given Planned Parenthood over \$9 million in grants over its twenty-year partnership.<sup>133</sup> Mitchell persisted: "The anger that's being expressed is going to hit you in the pocketbook. You have worked so hard to create a bipartisan organization. . . Your Facebook page has people cutting pink ribbons in half. Your branding is at stake."<sup>134</sup>

Mitchell also turned to Democratic senators Patty Murray of Washington and Barbara Boxer of California to respond to Brinker's comments. Senator Murray announced that she, Senator Frank Lautenberg and twenty-four other Democratic senators sent Komen a letter urging its leaders to reconsider. In the meantime, Murray's Facebook posts drew over 1,000 Likes and 327 comments largely condemning Komen's actions.

Mitchell next called on Senator Boxer:

I listened to everything Ambassador Brinker said and I have to say this is a complete revisionist comment that she's making about why suddenly Planned Parenthood lost this funding. . . If you just go back . . . two days ago the official spokespeople . . . said the reason was an investigation in the House. Well, . . . I was not born yesterday . . . And the fact is I'm reminded of the McCarthy era. . . What's next? . . . The YMCA? . . . To change the story is not going to work. People know what they said and this means

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<sup>131</sup> Karen Handel, *Planned Bullyhood: the Truth Behind the Headlines About the Planned Parenthood Funding Battle with Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, Howard Books, September 11, 2012.

<sup>132</sup> "Andrea Mitchell interviews Susan G. Komen's Nancy Brinker," First Read on NBCNews.com, February 2, 2012, <http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/02/02/10303379-andrea-mitchell-interviews-susan-g-komens-nancy-brinker?lite>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> "Andrea Mitchell interviews Susan G. Komen's Nancy Brinker," First Read on NBCNews.com, February 2, 2012, <http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/02/02/10303379-andrea-mitchell-interviews-susan-g-komens-nancy-brinker?lite>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>134</sup> "Andrea Mitchell interviews Susan G. Komen's Nancy Brinker," First Read on NBCNews.com, February 2, 2012, <http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/02/02/10303379-andrea-mitchell-interviews-susan-g-komens-nancy-brinker?lite>, accessed November 15, 2012.

that—unwittingly or wittingly—they’ve put themselves in the middle of a political witch hunt.<sup>135</sup>

Other members of the mainstream press began to directly reference and quote from social media postings. CNN reporter Mary Snow, while noting that Komen would not comment directly, referenced Komen’s Facebook page activity in a broadcast. “The foundation’s Facebook is being swamped with furious messages. This woman writes, ‘The money I was going to give you is now going to a nonprofit that actually cares about women’s health. Shame on you.’ Another post, ‘For women like myself without insurance, Planned Parenthood is a lifeline. Tell me how your political decision serves women like myself.’”<sup>136</sup>

In the meantime, Richards, after completing her own interview with CNN, learned that New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg had tweeted to 322,000 of his Twitter followers his pledge to donate \$250,000 of his own money to Planned Parenthood. Indeed, Planned Parenthood received donations from more than 9,000 individuals in the second day after the news broke; the organization announced that this represented a ninety-fold increase over its typical daily receipts.<sup>137</sup>

In four days, Twitter users sent more than 1.3 million Tweets referencing Planned Parenthood, the Susan G. Komen Foundation and related terms and hashtags, according to a Twitter spokeswoman. The chatter built steadily through the week, with more than 460,000 related Tweets on Thursday. Planned Parenthood helped spur the conversation by using a “promoted tweet,” Twitter’s equivalent of advertising.<sup>138</sup>

### Friday, Feb 3, 2012

On February 3, 2012, Komen reversed its decision and released a statement from its board of directors and Brinker saying that Planned Parenthood would be eligible to apply for funding and apologizing to the American public for its original decision (see Exhibit 7). On February 7<sup>th</sup>, Handel resigned.

Despite Komen’s retraction and Handel’s resignation, the controversy continued to draw attention from the mainstream press and in social media channels. David Rothschild, an economist with Yahoo! Research, concluded there was “little doubt that social and media pressure forced Komen to reverse its plan.”<sup>139</sup> He and his team reviewed hashtag data from 100,000 Twitter tweets posted from January 31<sup>st</sup> through February 3<sup>rd</sup> and found that the traffic was comprised largely of critics of Komen’s decision, noting that only three of the top twenty-eight

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<sup>135</sup> “Andrea Mitchell interviews Susan G. Komen’s Nancy Brinker,” First Read on NBCNews.com, February 2, 2012, <http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/02/02/10303379-andrea-mitchell-interviews-susan-g-komens-nancy-brinker?lite>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>136</sup> Wolf Blitzer and Mary Snow, “The Situation Room,” February 1, 2012, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1202/01/sitroom.02.html>, accessed October 23, 2012.

<sup>137</sup> Erin Gloria Ryan, “Susan G. Komen’s Public Relations Nightmare,” Jezebel.com, February 2, 2012, <http://jezebel.com/5881754/susan-g-komens-public-relations-nightmare>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Keach Hagey, “Susan G. Komen Flap Spurred on by Social Media,” Politico, February 4, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/72442.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>139</sup> David Rothschild, “The Twitter Users Who Drive the Furor Over Komen and Planned Parenthood,” The Signal, Yahoo! News, February 4, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/signal/twitter-users-drove-furor-over-komen-planned-parenthood-160326208.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.



hashtags favored Komen. Yahoo! used a tool it called “Influencers” to identify Twitter users who shared three characteristics: a high volume of tweeting, a large follower group and extensive tweeting on a particular topic.<sup>140</sup> They found that the influencers during the Planned Parenthood/Komen controversy were a mix of journalists, users of “official organization” Twitter accounts and private individuals and noted that the pool of influencers shifted over the three most active days (see Exhibit 8).<sup>141</sup>

Most online comments about the Komen Foundation’s decision were downbeat, according to NetBase Solutions Inc., a company that had developed an algorithm to “read” content from social media sources. Two-thirds of more than 3,600 sentiments expressed online about the split were negative, with people calling it “outrageous,” and saying it did “irreparable harm” to the organization, NetBase said.<sup>142</sup>

After the dust settled, Komen board member John D. Rafaelli gave an interview to *The Huffington Post*, acknowledging that he had not expected the furor that the board’s decision would cause. “Honestly, I didn’t think it through well enough. We don’t want to be pro-choice or pro-life; we want to be pro-cure. We screwed up, I’m saying it. We failed to keep abortion out of this, and we owe the people in the middle who only care about breast cancer and who have raised money for us an apology.”<sup>143</sup> Though Planned Parenthood prevailed in reversing Komen’s position and reclaiming its grant funding, some analysts felt the organization gained far more. “By focusing on the broader message of women’s health, rather than abortion politics, Planned Parenthood was able to recast the issue of breast-cancer screening into the larger context of public health, saying public health is not meant to be a political issue,” said Suzana Grego, a former Head of Media Relations at the Ford Foundation.<sup>144</sup> Holdridge agreed. “To us Komen wasn’t the bad guy,” she said. “To us Komen was an unfortunate victim of the bigger fight we were a part of,” she said.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> David Rothschild, “The Twitter Users Who Drive the Furor Over Komen and Planned Parenthood,” *The Signal*, Yahoo! News, February 4, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/signal/twitter-users-drove-furor-over-komen-planned-parenthood-160326208.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>141</sup> David Rothschild, “The Twitter Users Who Drive the Furor Over Komen and Planned Parenthood,” *The Signal*, Yahoo! News, February 4, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/signal/twitter-users-drove-furor-over-komen-planned-parenthood-160326208.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>142</sup> Elizabeth Lopatto and Anna Edney, “Planned Parenthood Gains Online Push for Komen Funds,” *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* Online, February 14, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-02-14/planned-parenthood-gains-online-push-for-komen-funds.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Lylah M. Alphonse, “Former Susan G. Komen VP Karen Handel: Planned Parenthood ‘Hijacked This Great Organization,’” *Healthy Living*, February 8, 2012, <http://shine.yahoo.com/healthy-living/former-susan-g-komen-vp-karen-handel-planned-180200826.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>144</sup> Suzanne Perry, “Planned Parenthood’s Social-Media Magic,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Francesca Chambers, “Planned Parenthood Claims Komen Was Bullied Into Dropping Their Funding by ‘People Who Don’t Care About Women’s Health,’” *Red Alert Politics.com*, <http://redalertpolitics.com/2012/06/07/planned-parenthood-claims-komen-was-bullied-into-dropping-their-funding-by-people-who-dont-care-about-womens-health/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Exhibit 1

Excerpts from E-mail to Planned Parenthood Supporters from Cecile Richards, January 31, 2012

I wanted to share some extremely discouraging news from a partner and longtime ally for women's health.

The Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation has announced that it will stop supporting lifesaving breast cancer screening for low-income and underserved women at Planned Parenthood health centers. . . .

Over the past five years, Komen funds have enabled Planned Parenthood health centers to provide nearly 170,000 clinical breast exams and referrals for more than 6,400 mammograms. . . .

But when anti-choice groups began criticizing the Komen Foundation for partnering with Planned Parenthood, the foundation ended its support for Planned Parenthood health centers. We know our opponents put their ideology over women's health and lives. What we never expected is that an ally like the Komen Foundation would choose to listen to them.

But as troubling as that decision is, it's not what I'm most worried about today. The grants that the Komen Foundation is ending go to Planned Parenthood health centers that provide cancer screenings to women who often have no other place to turn for care. We are determined to make sure that these women can continue to get the care they need — and, as always, that means we are counting on you. If you can, please make an emergency donation today to help us continue to protect and promote women's health wherever it is needed.

. . . The support of organizations like the Komen Foundation is always appreciated — but people like you are the true heart and soul of Planned Parenthood.

The women, men, and teens who rely on Planned Parenthood can't afford to be caught up in the heartless campaigns of anti-choice groups and their allies in Congress. I'm counting on you to help us defend their access to care — and to tell those who care more about politics than people that we will not stand for it. . . .

Source: "Women Are Watching," Amanda Makulec blog, January 31, 2012, <http://amandamakulec.com/page/6/?archives-list&archives-type=tags>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Exhibit 2

**Komen's First Post-Announcement Post on Facebook, February 1, 2012 and Selected Facebook User Reactions**

**Susan G. Komen for the Cure** At Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the women we serve are our highest priority in everything we do. Last year, we invested \$93 million in community health programs, which included 700,000 mammograms. Additionally, we began an initiative to further strengthen our grants program to be even more outcomes-driven and to allow for even greater investments in programs that directly serve women. We also implemented more stringent eligibility and performance criteria to support these strategies. While it is regrettable when changes in priorities and policies affect any of our grantees, such as a longstanding partner like Planned Parenthood, we must continue to evolve to best meet the needs of the women we serve and most fully advance our mission.

It is critical to underscore that the women we serve in communities remain our priority. We are working directly with Komen affiliates to ensure there is no interruption or gaps in services for women who need breast health screening and services.

Grant making decisions are not about politics—our priority is and always will be the women we serve. Making this issue political or leveraging it for fundraising purposes would be a disservice to women. February 1 at 8:52am

**Raymond Kelly** “At Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the women we serve are our highest priority in everything we do.” When the first sentence of your spin-doctor statement is a lie, I don't need to read the rest. Shut the organization down, before you break the hearts of any more sick women. February 4 at 3:19am

**Doris Keith Hampton** If SGK is for women-donate the \$ to clinics that will actually give mammograms to the ones that need it. PP does not have a nurse on care to provide these services so that there is lie #1. If only 5% goes to abortions; then why do 1.5 million abortions happens every year? I can always put down less than I weigh on my license but if a cop pulls me over he will see right there that's not the truth. Govt' from Day One has told us what we can't do with our bodies. 1) We can't do illegal drugs or you will be arrested. 2) Legal Drinking age is 21 3) can't vote till you are 18. A heart beat is life. I have a question for pro-choice . . . What's the difference of killing a baby inside your womb or after it's born? Women and men go to prison when they kill their babies. . .February 4 at 4:38am

Source: Facebook, February 4, 2012,

<https://www.facebook.com/susankomenforthecure/posts/10151256882495157>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Exhibit 3

Excerpts from Transcript of “Straight Talk” Video Posted on YouTube, February 2, 2012

“Hi, I’m Nancy Brinker, the founder and CEO of Susan G. Komen for the Cure. For thirty years Komen has always strived to deliver the highest impact in communities through our breast health grants. Recently we implemented new granting strategies and criteria that some have regrettably mischaracterized. And I wanted you to hear from me personally why these changes were necessary to further our mission. Due to your support, this year alone, Susan G. Komen was able to invest \$93 million in community grants across this country. We want to continue to fund grants at this level every year and even more.

But to do that, we must continually evolve and do a better job of measuring and achieving impact. We have the highest responsibility to ensure that these donor dollars make the biggest impact possible. Starting in 2010, I initiated a comprehensive review of our grants and standards. This isn’t unusual; we’re always looking at our policies and procedures. To be sure that we are doing the right thing for our supporters and the women we serve. These changes mean that we will be able to do more to help women and advance the fight against breast cancer. We are working to eliminate duplicative grants freeing up more dollars for higher impact programs. And wherever possible we want to grant to the provider that is actually providing the lifesaving mammogram. We also added more stringent eligibility and performance criteria to support these new strategies. Some might argue that our standards are too exacting. But over the past three decades people have given us more than just their money. They’ve given us their trust. And we take that very seriously.

Regrettably, this strategic shift will affect any number of longstanding partners. But we have always done what is right for our organization, for our donors and volunteers. We lead from mission and most importantly for this mission and the women we serve we are working with our affiliates to ensure that there are no gaps in services. Contrary to what some are saying, we are not pulling any existing grants; current grants are not affected. As we move forward, we will implement these new strategies, which will allow us to serve even more women. We will never bow to political pressure. We will always stand firm in our goal to end breast cancer forever. . . .And the scurrilous accusations being hurled at this organization are profoundly hurtful to so many of us who’ve put our heart, soul and lives into this organization. But more importantly, they are a dangerous distraction from the work that still remains to be done in ridding the world of breast cancer.

. . . I’ve done this work for 32 years, ever since I made the promise to Susan Komen. And I will do it as long as I live. Thank you.”

Source: “Straight Talk,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMe8lvEHvoc>, accessed August 15, 2012.

Note that this video was removed from YouTube prior to the publication of this case.

Exhibit 4

Twitter Users Accused Komen of Deleting Facebook Posts, February 2, 2012

**Todd Defren** Confirmed: @KomenfortheCure is deleting critical FB posts from their Wall. Way to make a bad PR problem worse.

**Susan G. Komen** We have not, do not and will not delete posts on our Facebook wall. If you click “everyone” they will all appear.

**Laura-Wise Blau** I was deleted.

Source: “Susan G. Komen PR Disaster: Lessons Learned,” PR Squared, February 3, 2012, <http://www.pr-squared.com/index.php/2012/02/susan-g-komen-pr-disaster-lessons-learned>, accessed November 15, 2012.

Exhibit 5

Selected Komen Facebook Posts, February 1, 2012

**Eddie Louise Clark** I want to stop breast cancer—but I DEPEND on Planned Parenthood for my screenings. I am 50 and have no insurance. You may have just defunded me. That sucks!

**Peri Appollo Shacknow** Taking my planned Susan G. Komen donation and sending it to Planned Parenthood. Women’s health is not a political issue.

**Marybeth Sbrogna** THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRO-FETUS AND PRO-LIFE. So how do you feel about the 97% of services of Planned Parenthood that are PRO-LIFE? As in, cancer screenings, preventative services, STD screenings? Or is it only the 3% that matters? You are not pro-life if you are in favor of taking health care services away from the women who can least afford to lose them.

**Elizabeth Hirsch** “Cancer doesn’t care if you’re pro-choice, anti-choice, progressive or conservative.” A sad day for the Komen foundation.

**Birgit Atherton Jones** Bravo, for finally doing the right thing! Since not a single Planned Parenthood clinic performs mammograms, the hysteria of the haters is not well founded. The grants can simply go to another organization that does not make the bulk of its income from abortion—as PP does! Women can continue to receive care but not from an organization (PP) that makes the bulk of their income on the death of pre-born babies! I’m sure that many health departments would love to partner with you!

**Jason Pollock** Dear Susan G. Komen for the Cure, in case you didn't know, this move is doing serious damage to your brand. This is SO wrong. Thousands of women can't get a breast exam because of this. Please SHARE this and tell Komen that you oppose this action!

Source: Susan G. Komen for the Cure Facebook page, February 1, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/susangkomenforthecure>, accessed November 15, 2012.

## Exhibit 6

### Ford Warriors in Pink Facebook Posts Feb 2, 2012

**Danice Pruitt** No organization can make all the people happy all the time. So it is no wonder that Planned Parenthood or Susan G. Komen can't make all of the people happy all of the time . . . I support SGK. . . (February 2 at 3:47pm)

**Nicole Grattarola** You don't need to donate to Susan G Komen to support breast cancer charities. I recommend the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. (February 2 at 3:51pm)

**Linda Humphrey Strugala** I don't support Komen, never have, never will...there are other more reputable foundations out there who will actually provide a larger share of donated monies to the charities and not to their executives and boards. They have one of the worst records for money going to charities instead of to wages and advertising, etc. Now they chose to show how pro-life they are by cutting off funds for cancer screening. Way to be manipulated...(February 2 at 4:50pm)

**Geri Wilson** well, ford, guess my mustang and me will have to unfriend you. There's no room for politicizing health care and creating a good girl vs. bad girl health care system. (February 2 at 5:47pm)

**Carmen Rocha** They are still doing good for the cause! Everyone has the right to put their money where they want to & so does sbk! (February 2 at 6:02pm)

**Cindy 'Hall' Hockstetler** I had no idea that Komen sent money to planned parenthood so I am glad they stopped. There are plenty of pro life organizations that support ALL women, born and unborn, where the breast cancer funds could be sent instead! If they resume their grants to planned Parenthood I shall withdraw my support of Komen! I am a breast cancer survivor and value life, Planned Parenthood murders babies (February 2 at 6:29pm)

Source: Ford Warriors in Pink Facebook page, February 2, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/FordWarriorsinPink>, accessed November 15, 2012.

**Exhibit 7**

**Excerpts from February 3, 2012 Statement from Susan G. Komen Board of Directors and Nancy Brinker**

We want to apologize to the American public for recent decisions that cast doubt upon our commitment to our mission of saving women's lives. The events of this week have been deeply unsettling for our supporters, partners and friends and all of us at Susan G. Komen. We have been distressed at the presumption that the changes made to our funding criteria were done for political reasons or to specifically penalize Planned Parenthood. They were not.

Our original desire was to fulfill our fiduciary duty to our donors by not funding grant applications made by organizations under investigation. We will amend the criteria to make clear that disqualifying investigations must be criminal and conclusive in nature and not political. That is what is right and fair.

Our only goal for our granting process is to support women and families in the fight against breast cancer. Amending our criteria will ensure that politics has no place in our grant process. We will continue to fund existing grants, including those of Planned Parenthood, and preserve their eligibility to apply for future grants, while maintaining the ability of our affiliates to make funding decisions that meet the needs of their communities.

It is our hope and we believe it is time for everyone involved to pause, slow down and reflect on how grants can most effectively and directly be administered without controversies that hurt the cause of women. We urge everyone who has participated in this conversation across the country over the last few days to help us move past this issue. We do not want our mission marred or affected by politics – anyone's politics. . . .

Source: "Statement from Susan G. Komen Board of Directors and Founder and CEO Nancy G. Brinker," Susan G. Komen for the Cure website, February 3, 2012, <http://ww5.komen.org/KomenNewsArticle.aspx?id=19327354148>, accessed November 15, 2012.



**Exhibit 8: Twitter Influencers, February 1, 2012 to February 3, 2012**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Twitter Handle and Affiliation</b>
February 1, 2012	PPact, Planned Parenthood
	IPPF_WHR, Planned Parenthood
	rtraister, New York Times journalist
	NPRHealth, NPR Health
	HuffingtonPost, Huffington Post
	David_Feldman_, Comedian
	Nancyfranklin, New Yorker journalist
	Marikatogo, Moveon.org
February 2, 2012	US_JUST, activist group
	JessGrose, Slate journalist
	Dcdebbie, unaffiliated
	Shannynmoore, unaffiliated
	Ezraklein, Washington Post journalist
	Slate, Slate
	Edstetzer, President of Lifeway
	Taradublinrocks, unaffiliated
	JessicaPhD08, journalist
February 3, 2012	Dailykos, Daily Kos
	Huffingtonpost, Huffington Post
	Ppact, Planned Parenthood
	BreakingNews, BreakingNews.com
	ProducerMatthew, Reuters journalist
	lowahawkblog, unaffiliated
	Jayrosen_nyu, unaffiliated
	Julieklausner, unaffiliated
	Someecards, Some E Cards

Source: Adapted from David Rothschild, “The Twitter Users Who Drove the Furor Over Komen and Panned Parenthood,” The Signal—Yahoo! News, February 4, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/signal/twitter-users-drove-furor-over-komen-planned-parenthood-160326208.html>, accessed November 15, 2012.