A Question of Motives for Funding Research

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Description
A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about the ethical issues that arise when the institution funding research has morally suspicious motives.

Body
Tests to study the distribution of a parasitic disorder in an illiterate, non-European immigrant population is called for by a state's Governor for reasons which may be allied with her recent political campaign against immigrants. (The campaign characterized immigrants as a source of disease in the state.) The state offers funding to your research group.

How, if at all, does the possible political motive influence your decision about whether to undertake the research and under what conditions?

Notes
Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant. You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at http://www.onlineethics.org/Resources/TeachingTools/Modules/19237.aspx. Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.
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Case Study / Scenario
Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

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