



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 28, 2015

House Republicans to Create Committee to Probe Planned Parenthood

Much of the tension in congressional debate on a Continuing Resolution spending bill has surrounded funding for Planned Parenthood, which is the subject of controversy as a result of recently released videos revealing the organization's participation in an organ harvesting scheme. It now appears that a clean Continuing Resolution will be passed, absent of riders to defund the organization. As a result, Republicans are looking to create a special panel to investigate Planned Parenthood instead. GOP leadership believes that the panel's findings could lend weight to the efforts to defund the pro-abortion organization.



In his first major interview since announcing his resignation, House Speaker John Boehner told CBS' *Face the Nation* that there would not be a government shutdown, and that while Planned Parenthood's funding will not be tied to the government funding bill, the House committee will be probing Planned Parenthood.

"The Senate is expected to pass a continuing resolution next week," Boehner said on Sunday. "We'll also take up a select committee to investigate these horrific videos that we've seen from abortion clinics ... in several states."

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Planned Parenthood, which is responsible for approximately 300,000 abortions each year, has received federal funding since 1970, when President Richard Nixon signed the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act. Constitutionalists have long observed that the federal government has no authority in the U.S. Constitution to fund any of Planned Parenthood's activities, and calls to cut funding to Planned Parenthood have increased after the release of undercover videos recorded by the Center for Medical Progress in which Planned Parenthood officials discuss the sale of body parts of aborted babies. Critics contend that the scenes captured in the video are not only despicable but illegal if the organization was making profits on the organ sales.

Funding for Planned Parenthood was a major component of the debate on the government funding bill. Government funding needs to be approved by September 30 in order to avoid a government shutdown, and once again, lawmakers have failed to pass the necessary spending bills, thereby compelling Congress to rely on a short-term Continuing Resolution to keep the government open.

A funding bill that defunds Planned Parenthood would have passed easily in the House, but a test vote in the Senate failed to garner the necessary 60 votes to block a Democratic filibuster.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has also acknowledged that President Obama would have vetoed the bill even if it had passed the Senate. "The way you make a law in this country [is] the



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Congress has to pass it, and the president has to sign it," he told WYMT-TV.

"The president's made it very clear he's not going to sign any bill that includes defunding of Planned Parenthood — so that's another issue that awaits a new president hopefully with a different point of view."

Citing fears that the GOP would be blamed for any resulting shutdown, some Republicans advocated against tying Planned Parenthood's funding to the government funding bill, while also pledging to pursue investigations against Planned Parenthood outside of the funding debate.

The House will be voting this week to create the special panel that will investigate Planned Parenthood's improper fetal tissue sales. According to *Politico*, the special panel will have the power to obtain documents and testimony to determine if a criminal case is necessary.

Politico reports that the subcommittee for the panel would fall under the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) would serve as the panel's chairwoman.

"What people want us to do is to get to the bottom of what has transpired with Planned Parenthood and the utilization of taxpayer funds. There is frustration from our constituents," Blackburn told *Politico* on Sunday. "The more we know, the more questions we have."

Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee have not yet indicated who would serve as the top Democrat on the panel. Overall, Democrats have been rather close-minded in their [approach](#) to the panel, treating it as a GOP scheme rather than an effort to determine whether it is justifiable for taxpayer dollars to continue to be used to fund an organization that engages in illegal and barbaric practices.

"House Republicans have unveiled plans to create a Benghazi-style committee to attack Planned Parenthood, proving that GOP efforts to restrict access to health care are snowballing out of control," Democratic Representatives Louise Slaughter of New York and Diana DeGette of Colorado said in a statement.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) accused Republicans of waging a war against women. "Make no mistake: House Republicans have renewed their war on women's health. With this Committee, Republicans are trying to make it easier to shut down the government and harder for millions of women to access the lifesaving health care they need," she said. "Hard-working families deserve better than a taxpayer-funded Republican Committee fixated on dismantling women's health."

Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, called the GOP efforts to create a select committee a "five-ring circus." "We will, of course, cooperate with any fact-finding inquiry — even though these investigations are all based on false and discredited claims, without a shred of evidence of wrongdoing by Planned Parenthood," Laguens said. "This is really an attempt of to ban abortion and defund Planned Parenthood. It's an assault on every woman whose breast cancer was caught early because of Planned Parenthood and every woman who has made her own decision about whether and when to have a child."

But despite the pro-abortion rhetoric, the [content](#) of the videos released by the Centers for Medical Progress cannot easily be ignored. CMP's released tapes include secretly recorded comments from executives of Planned Parenthood and StemExpress, undercover footage from clinics — including footage of fetal tissue being handled by workers, footage of fetal tissue from aborted pregnancies, and



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on-camera interviews with Holly O'Donnell, a former StemExpress procurement technician.

In a video released on August 19, O'Donnell, who appears in a total of three videos, recalls encountering "fetuses" that still had beating hearts.

The former technician went on to describe how her supervisor so callously referred to the beating heart of a gestated fetus as "cool."

Several revelations have come out of the release of these videos by CMP, many of which reveal illegal, as well as immoral and unethical, practices by the hands of Planned Parenthood and StemExpress, a California-based company that partnered with Planned Parenthood to supply human blood, cells, and tissue products to biomedical researchers. Videos have featured Planned Parenthood officials admitting to altering abortion procedures to procure fetal tissue, as well as the sale of fetal tissue for profit. A video last week also revealed that StemExpress did not always obtain consent from mothers to use their fetal tissue, a practice that Fox News notes would be "a serious ethical breach."



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