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The Post's View

The Planned Parenthood witch hunt

By **Editorial Board** February 20

TWELVE STATES that undertook investigations of Planned Parenthood found no wrongdoing. An additional eight states refused even to investigate, citing lack of credible evidence. A [grand jury in Texas](#) and a [federal judge in California](#) exonerated the organization after each conducted extensive reviews. Three [congressional committees](#) failed to turn up any improprieties. In short, the hidden-camera [videos](#) purporting to show illegal selling of fetal tissue show no such thing.

Despite all that, a Republican-led House panel is undeterred in conducting its own investigation, or, more accurately, witch hunt. Even more troubling than the considerable time and money that will be wasted is the potential damage to health care and medical research.

The coyly named [Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives](#) has made sweeping requests (including three [subpoenas](#)) for documents and information from more than 30 agencies and organizations that provide abortions or are involved in fetal tissue research. Of particular concern is the panel's demand for the [names of doctors](#), medical students and researchers involved in performing abortions or conducting research with fetal tissue. Democrats on the panel decried the creation of such a database, which — without rules to protect it from public disclosure — risks individual privacy and safety without legitimate reason. How is the name of a graduate student who five years ago was an intern at a lab relevant to anything?

Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), chair of the House panel, has defended the investigation as necessary because of lingering questions raised by secretly recorded videos of Planned Parenthood personnel released last year by the equally misnamed Center for Medical Progress. Those videos, supposedly showing Planned Parenthood illegally selling aborted fetal organs for profit, have been discredited. A grand jury empaneled in Houston to investigate Planned Parenthood ended up [indicting](#) the activists who produced the videos and, after reviewing the evidence for two months, cleared Planned Parenthood of any wrongdoing. U.S. District Court Judge William H. Orrick reached the same conclusion, granting a preliminary [injunction](#) prohibiting release of illegally obtained recordings and materials in a [decision](#) that laid bare the fraud against Planned Parenthood. Also noted by the judge was the alarming increase in incidents of harassment and violence directed against abortion providers since the videos were released

last July. Among them: four incidents of arson and the [attack](#) on a Colorado clinic by a gunman in which three people were killed.

Federal law permits medical use of fetal tissue. The handful of Planned Parenthood clinics in which patients are able to donate fetal tissue adhered to the law that allows reasonable payment for costs associated with donations, but they have stopped accepting any reimbursement because of the controversy. Congress, with approval from both sides of the aisle, [legalized](#) fetal tissue research in 1993 because of the potential for scientific advances in treating and curing illnesses.

Congress has the prerogative to change that law, if it wants to undermine the kind of medical research that has led to breakthroughs such as the polio vaccine. But it has no call to engage in a reckless investigation with the potential to cause a great deal of harm.

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