Congressional Panel Seeks Charges Against Key Player in Planned Parenthood's Tissue Trafficking

(Advance the above video to the 1:18:45 mark, when the meeting begins.)

Wednesday, the House Select Panel on Infant Lives voted 8-0 to find StemExpress and its CEO, Catherine Spears Dyer, in contempt of Congress after Democrats walked out of the meeting.

In its report, the committee found that federal law prohibits the sale of fetal tissue, as well as profiting from the transfer of fetal tissue intended for research. As it states, the panel "sought to evaluate accounting records of entities involved in the transfer of fetal tissue to determine whether the statute was effective, required amending, and whether a legislative modification would be required to achieve Congress' intent."

As a result of the investigative reporting of the Center for Medical Progress, StemExpress was identified as an entity that was procuring fetal tissue from abortion clinics that it then transferred to researchers. It subpoenaed a number of documents from the company, including its accounting records, for congressional review.

While StemExpress complied with several requests, it refused to provide accounting documents related to its transfers of fetal tissue. The panel's report states:

> *This left the Panel with no accounting documents from StemExpress, a referral to a former employee who StemExpress' counsel later admitted had no accounting documents, a referral by StemExpress to its outside accountant Scinto for whom StemExpress asserted privileges, and the refusal of StemExpress and Ms. Dyer to provide the names of accounting personnel so the Panel could conduct interviews.*
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> *Panel staff prepared a report in consultation with its senior auditor that outlined the accounting documents necessary to complete a full and professional evaluation of StemExpress fetal tissue transactions. That work product relied upon accepted accounting practices and concluded that a credible comparison of fetal tissue revenue against allowable costs required actual accounting records from StemExpress. In sum, StemExpress' refusal to comply with the February 12, 2016, subpoena and Ms. Dyer's refusal to comply with the March 29, 2016, subpoena prevented the Panel from completing its assigned work.*

As the panel debate Wednesday over what course of action to take, Democrats became increasingly argumentative. Eventually, Ranking Member Janice Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and her Democratic colleagues walked out, leaving the eight Republican members—who still constituted a quorum.

After the remaining committee members voted unanimously to forward charges of Contempt of Congress, the chair, Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) issued the following statement:

"Nearly one year ago our Panel was established and given the important task of investigating very disturbing allegations that some abortion clinics and middleman procurement organizations, including StemExpresss, were violating federal law by profiting from the sale of human fetal tissue. In order to determine if these entities were in violation of federal law or if the relevant statute needs to be updated, our Panel must review all accounting and banking records.

“Nine months is enough time for an entity to produce accounting documents. It is our hope that by approving this report today, StemExpress and its CEO, Cate Dyer, will begin to take our investigation seriously. It’s time for them to turn over the records we need to complete our investigation.

“A subpoena is not a suggestion. It is a lawful order that must be complied with. If StemExpress continues to obstruct, then we will work with House leadership to determine the necessary next steps.”