

Pro-Life Activist Could Face 20 Years in Prison for Outing Planned Parenthood

An pro-life activist indicted for using a fake driver's license ID to aid secret filming inside Planned Parenthood facilities will present himself to a Houston court on Thursday and likely seek to have charges dropped.

David Daleiden, indicted in January by a Houston-area grand jury, will appear at Harris County District Court in Houston and then go through booking, his lawyer Jared Woodfill said, adding he will seek to have charges quashed.

Daleiden is leader of the California-based Center for Medical Progress that released the secretly filmed videos used to accuse Planned Parenthood of trading in aborted fetal tissue. He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted on charges of tampering with a governmental record.

In a twist for the Texas Republican leaders who had ordered an investigation and accused the women's health group of illegally trading in aborted fetal tissue, the grand jury in January cleared Planned Parenthood and indicted video makers Daleiden and Sandra Merritt.

Merritt, a lesser figure in the filming, appeared at a Houston court on Wednesday. She was offered a type of a probation deal in which, if she keeps a clean record for a certain period, the charge of tampering with a government record would be dropped, prosecutors said.

Lawyers for the two do not dispute that the pair used false IDs but said they did so for investigative journalism.

The videos released last summer purported to show Planned

Parenthood officials trying to negotiate prices for aborted fetal tissue. Under federal law, donated human fetal tissue may be used for research, but profiting from its sale is prohibited.

In response to the videos, Texas and other Republican-controlled states tried to halt funding for Planned Parenthood. U.S. congressional Republicans pushed for a funding cut.

Planned Parenthood denied the allegation and sued in federal court, arguing the people who recorded the videos acted illegally.

Planned Parenthood has said Daleiden and Merritt presented fake IDs in April 2015 and posed as research executives from a fictitious company to secretly film conversations at a health and administrative center in Houston. {eo}

© 2016 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.