

Pro-Life Group Sued Over Planned Parenthood Video Releases

An anti-abortion group that released videos purporting to show Planned Parenthood staff discussing the illegal sale of aborted fetal tissue was sued on Friday by a group of abortion providers seeking to block the release of recordings it claims violate its members' privacy and threatens their safety.

In a complaint filed in San Francisco federal court, the National Abortion Federation, a nonprofit representing abortion providers, accused the Center for Medical Progress and its founder, David Daleiden, of illegally infiltrating and recording its private meetings.

U.S. District Judge William Orrick late Friday issued a temporary restraining order blocking the defendants from releasing videos and audio recordings containing NAF member names and addresses, and dates and locations of future meetings, pending a hearing on Monday.

Orrick said the NAF would likely prevail on the merits of its lawsuit, and said it could face "harassment, intimidation, violence, invasion of privacy, and injury to reputation" absent a halt.

The NAF is also seeking compensatory and punitive damages.

Daleiden in a statement said the Center for Medical Progress "follows all applicable laws in the course of our investigative journalism work" and will contest any attempts to suppress its constitutional rights under the First Amendment. He has said his Irvine, California-based group plans to release more videos.

Release of the earlier videos prompted calls in Congress to cut off funding for Planned Parenthood, and the Republican-led Senate may vote on such a bill in August.

It is unlikely that Congress could override a potential White House veto.

Planned Parenthood has said that the video was heavily edited and falsely portrayed its “participation in tissue donation programs that support life-saving scientific research.”

Friday’s lawsuit followed what the NAF called the Center for Medical Progress’ release in July of four “misleading” and “heavily edited” videos, some of which named NAF members, to advance its goal of ending safe access to abortions, and stopping legal fetal tissue donations that can help save lives.

The lawsuit also accused Daleiden of creating the sham Biomax Procurement Services, which held itself out as a legitimate fetal tissue procurement company, in 2013 to trick abortion providers and gain access to NAF meetings.

“The safety and security of our members is our top priority,” NAF President Vicki Saporta said in a statement. “That security has been compromised.”

Polls show that a majority of Americans want abortion to remain legal at least under some circumstances.

The U.S. Supreme Court is closely divided on the issue, and may soon have multiple vacancies. Four justices are at least 76 years old.

The case is National Abortion Federation v Center for Medical Progress et al, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, No. 15-03522.

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