



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 3, 2011

Congressional Panel Launches Investigation of Planned Parenthood

Now, reports the [Associated Press](#), a Republican-led House panel has ordered Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) to relinquish “more than a decade’s worth of documents in a probe of whether the organization improperly spends public money on abortions.” In a letter to Planned Parenthood officials, Representative Cliff Stearns (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce investigations subcommittee, said that his panel “has questions about the policies in place and actions undertaken by PPFA and its affiliates relating to its use of federal funding and its compliance with federal restrictions on the funding of abortions.”



Stearns has asked Planned Parenthood to hand over 12 years of internal audits showing how much federal money it received and spent between 1998 and 2010. He is also asking for state Planned Parenthood audits from the past 20 years, along with an explanation of how “segregation between family planning and abortion services is accomplished,” and how Planned Parenthood’s compliance to federal funding restrictions is guaranteed.

While federal law prohibits the federal funding of abortion, reported [The Hill](#), “Planned Parenthood critics argue that, because money is fungible, there’s no practical way for the group to isolate the private funds it receives for abortion services from the federal funds it receives for contraception and other family-planning programs.”

Even as Planned Parenthood insists that abortion makes up a mere three percent of its business, recent studies by pro-life groups show that the deadly procedure accounts for as much as [38 percent of the organization’s revenue](#). “The American taxpayer does not want to be in the business of abortion, and this investigation is an important first step toward ending public funding of the nation’s largest abortion provider,” said Charmaine Yoest of [Americans United for Life](#) (AUL), one of the several groups which have investigated Planned Parenthood.

[AUL’s research](#) found that, based on Planned Parenthood’s own figures, abortion accounted for at least \$114.9 million of the \$404.9 million the group reported as income in 2008-09. AUL also found that abortion has accounted for an increasing percentage of Planned Parenthood’s clinic income over the past decade: 32 percent in 2001, 33 percent in 2006, and 37 percent in 2009. “As the tax dollars going to Planned Parenthood doubled, so did the number of abortions it performed,” said Yoest. “It’s time for a public accounting for the funds.”

Predictably, Democratic House members have come to the defense of Planned Parenthood, calling the investigation “part of a Republican vendetta against an organization that provides family planning and



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other medical care to low-income women and men.”

In a September 27 epistle to Stearns, Representatives Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), a member of the panel’s Oversight subcommittee, insisted that the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services, along with those overseeing state Medicaid programs, “regularly audit Planned Parenthood and report publicly on their findings. These audits have not identified any pattern of misuse of federal funds, illegal activity, or other abuse that would justify a broad and invasive congressional investigation.”

The Democratic pair told Stearns that his “fervent ideological opposition to Planned Parenthood does not justify launching this intrusive investigation. We are committed to strong congressional oversight. But we are opposed to investigations that appear to be designed to harass and shut down an organization simply because Republicans disagree with the work that it does.”

Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards said her group is “confident that any fair-minded person will see through this politically motivated investigation.” She predicted that as people “learn about this latest attack on their health care provider, they will speak out and stand with us to protect access to health care for women and families.”

To Richards’ insistence that Planned Parenthood has nothing to hide, Yoest challenged: “Prove it. Open the records. Cecile Richards needs to account for the conduct of the abortion mega-provider. Substantial evidence exists that Planned Parenthood is an abuse-laden organization requiring Congressional oversight.”

The congressional investigation is the latest attempt by Republican lawmakers — with intense pressure from pro-life groups — to target the abortion giant. Last February “House Republicans easily passed an amendment to a 2011 spending bill to prohibit PPFA from receiving any federal funding,” reported *The Hill*. However, “Senate Democrats stripped the language from the larger legislative package before it became law.”

During debate over the amendment, House sponsor Mike Spence (R-Ind.) told his colleagues that it is “morally wrong to take the taxpayer dollars of millions of pro-life Americans and use it to fund organizations that provide and promote abortion.”

At the state level, the legislatures of Florida, Indiana, Kansas, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin have all voted to de-fund Planned Parenthood — measures which the abortion provider has asked federal judges to overturn.

At least one religious leader added his voice to the pro-life chorus calling for an investigation of Planned Parenthood. “I can think of very few organizations that are more deserving of a thorough federal investigation than Planned Parenthood,” commented Richard Land of the Southern Baptist [Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission](#). “How they spend approximately \$363 million in taxpayer money annually is certainly a legitimate subject for congressional oversight and concern. This anti-life organization with a nefarious eugenics and racist past should not be getting any government funding period. But as long as they are getting government funding, they should be the subject of aggressive congressional scrutiny.”

Photo: Rep. Cliff Stearns



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