



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

June 21, 2016

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Ranking Member  
Select Investigative Panel  
2367 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Schakowsky:

I am writing in response to your June 16, 2016 letter calling on me to disband the Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. I do not have the authority to disband this panel on my own initiative. That said, the House created the panel for good reasons, and its findings to date continue to be a matter of compelling public interest.

The Constitution gives Congress the power to write all laws and, with it, the duty to investigate how those laws work. The Rules of the House set out the obligation to engage in the:

[A]nalysis, appraisal, and evaluation of . . . the application, administration, execution, and effectiveness of Federal laws; and . . . conditions and circumstances that may indicate the necessity or desirability of enacting new or additional legislation.<sup>1</sup>

Pursuant to this duty, the House created the Select Panel on Infant Lives to:

- [C]onduct a full and complete investigation and study and issue a final report of its findings . . . regarding—
- (1) medical procedures and business practices used by entities involved in fetal tissue procurement;
  - (2) any other relevant matters with respect to fetal tissue procurement;
  - (3) Federal funding and support for abortion providers;
  - (4) the practices of providers of second and third trimester abortions, including partial birth abortion and procedures that may lead to a child born alive as a result of an attempted abortion;
  - (5) medical procedures for the care of a child born alive as a result of an attempted abortion; and
  - (6) any changes in law or regulation necessary as a result of any findings made under this subsection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> House Rule X, Clause 2(a).


Thus, of equal importance with writing laws is reviewing their efficacy and usefulness.

The Select Panel on Infant Lives has already proven its worth by revealing how some entities in the fetal tissue industry may have violated federal law. For example, in an April 20, 2016 hearing, the Select Panel presented accounting documents and elicited testimony from former U.S. attorneys that show some entities may have violated 42 U.S.C. § 289g-2, which makes profiting from the transfer of fetal tissue a ten-year felony offense. The Select Panel likewise found that the some entities may have violated laws that protect patient privacy and regulations to safeguard biomedical ethics. Both of these findings were reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General.<sup>3</sup>

Your letter says that the Select Panel itself “has a chilling effect on research.” I respectfully disagree with this claim and reject the notion that some issues are too sensitive about which to inquire. On the contrary, the value of human life is so precious that we must closely examine whether current public policy protects it. The Select Panel, for example, discovered a website that allowed a researcher to order any baby part imaginable at a given gestation period and proceed to check out; such a practice clearly threatens the human dignity. Furthermore, I trust Chairman Blackburn to conduct the work of the Select Panel in a way that will focus on the facts and also protect the privacy of those involved.

For all of these reasons, I support the panel in completing its work.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker

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<sup>2</sup> H. Res. 461

<sup>3</sup> Available at:

<https://energycommerce.house.gov/sites/republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/files/documents/114/letters/20160603HIPAA.pdf> and

<https://energycommerce.house.gov/sites/republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/files/documents/114/letters/20160603IRB.pdf>.