

David Daleiden Wins Planned Parenthood Legal Fight

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Undercover journalist David Daleiden (left); a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic (right). CREDITS: Screenshot/Shutterstock

After 11 Years, David Daleiden Wins Planned Parenthood Legal Fight

David Daleiden has emerged with the final charge dismissed and his record cleared, marking a major victory for pro-life journalism and for the undercover videos that appeared to show fetal tissue and organ trafficking inside the abortion industry.

[UPDATE] Last week, California completely dismissed and expunged all charges against investigative journalist David Daleiden following a settlement last year.

Daleiden, the founder and president of the Center for Medical Progress, forever changed the conversation around Planned Parenthood in 2015 when he and his colleague Sandra Merritt published undercover videos showing Planned Parenthood


executives negotiating the illegal sale of aborted fetal tissue and organs to what they believed was a biomedical research company.

In response to the initial release of the videos, then-California Attorney General Kamala Harris ordered a raid on Daleiden's apartment and seized his computers, emails, and video recordings. Two years later, new California Attorney General Xavier Becerra filed 15 felony charges against Daleiden and Merritt, with 14 of them eventually dropped before new charges were filed. Becerra claimed that the pair "manufactured identities and a fictitious bioresearch company to meet women's healthcare providers and covertly record the private discussions they initiated."

The charges against the pair marked the first time California had ever prosecuted undercover journalists. In 2021, a U.S. district court judge levied an injunction against Daleiden, prohibiting him from releasing any other videos.

But Daleiden refused to give in and continued his legal battle. In January 2025, California offered to dismiss all charges and expunge the records of Daleiden and Merritt if they would agree to no longer contest the charges.

Last week, the legal battle finally ended, after a single remaining misdemeanor against Daleiden was dismissed and his record cleared. Daleiden announced the news on X: "As promised, the final charge has been DISMISSED and the case completely expunged—after a couple months' administrative delay, and a truly bizarre last-minute "April Fool's" attempt by @PPFA and @NatAbortionFed to overturn the State's agreement. More on that later..."

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 More on that later... <https://t.co/0skLCQ5pUW>

— David Daleiden (@daviddaleiden) April 2, 2026

James O'Keefe, founder of Project Veritas and current CEO of O'Keefe Media Group, attributed the victory to Daleiden's persistence in exposing the truth, writing,

"It took 11 years defending himself over one story. This is what they do to people who hold them accountable. Nobody is held accountable because the people who have the power to do so are afraid of the retaliation. But David is different. His love of truth was greater than his regard for himself."

Daleiden responded to the praise by writing, “One step at a time, we can recover the conviction that more speech is better than less speech in addressing civilizational injustices perpetrated by those in power.”

Daleiden’s courage had a massive impact, though. His reporting led to numerous state and federal investigations that damaged Planned Parenthood’s operations, while also raising public awareness of the insidious reality of fetal tissue trafficking. The videos also led directly to a call to defund Planned Parenthood, and in response, more than 20 states have fully stripped public funding from the multi-billion dollar for-profit corporation.

Planned Parenthood is now struggling to survive amid changing abortion restrictions and its lack of access to taxpayer money.

In 2025, the Trump administration stripped federal funding from Planned Parenthood for one year. However, the Department for Health and Human Services is proposing a new rule, which, when implemented, would permanently prohibit organizations that perform abortions from receiving federal funding.

None of this may have ever happened without Daleiden and Merritt’s “love of truth.”

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

{Published January 31, 2025} California has agreed to dismiss all charges against pro-life activists David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt, concluding an eight-year-long legal battle over undercover videos they filmed exposing abortion providers discussing the procurement and sale of fetal tissue and parts.

The Center for Medical Progress (CMP), led by Daleiden, announced Monday that the two reached a plea deal with the California Attorney General’s Office.

After releasing the videos, the pair were criminally charged for secretly recording conversations with 14 people affiliated with Planned Parenthood and then publicly releasing them.

As part of the agreement, Daleiden and Merritt will enter a “no contest” plea, avoiding jail time, fines, probation, or an admission of wrongdoing. The plea will initially be recorded as a misdemeanor but is set to be dismissed and expunged within a year.

Daleiden **called** the resolution “a huge victory for my investigative reporting and for the public’s right to know the truth about Planned Parenthood’s sale of aborted baby body parts.”

He added that this outcome will not stop him from continuing to investigate and expose

misconduct by the abortion industry and its use of taxpayer funds for controversial research. Last summer, for example, Daleiden was able to finally **release** this shocking video of high-level Planned Parenthood executives talking about using illegal partial-birth abortion to harvest intact fetal organs:

Mat Staver, chairman of the Liberty Counsel, which represented Merritt, praised the agreement, asserting that Merritt's actions were justified and accusing the state of political persecution.

“Sandra Merritt did nothing wrong. She did the right thing by exposing the depravity of the abortion industry,” he **stated**. This plea agreement ends an unjust criminal case by dropping these baseless criminal charges without any prison time, fines or other penalties.”

He added, “Murdering human babies to harvest their body parts for profit is evil and there is no excuse for Sandra’s political persecution. This is an extraordinary result for Sandra, and the state of California deserves to walk away virtually empty handed.”

Before this groundbreaking case, California had never pursued criminal charges against undercover journalists for covert recordings made in the public interest. However, this brave grandmother was hit with **16 felony charges** and faced over a decade in prison for exposing the abortion industry’s involvement in the illegal sale of organs from aborted babies.

The controversy began in 2015 when the Center for Medical Progress released a series of undercover videos showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing fetal tissue procurement with Merritt and Daleiden, who the officials believed were representatives of a biomedical research firm.

Daleiden and Merritt recorded conversations at events hosted by Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation (NAF) in 2014 and 2015.

Planned Parenthood denied any illegal activity, accusing the group of deceptive editing, though CMP had also released full-length footage. NAF sued in response, and Daleiden and Merritt faced multiple charges, including illegal recordings and the use of falsified IDs.

Houston prosecutors **dropped charges** against Daleiden and Merritt in a related case in Texas in 2016. Following the announcement of charges, more than 130,000 people signed a petition calling for the charges to be dismissed and urging prosecutors to instead investigate Planned Parenthood officials seen in the undercover footage allegedly discussing the illegal sale of fetal tissue.

The California case, however, continued for several more years. As the Standing for Freedom Center **previously reported**:

“In 2021, U.S. District Judge William Orrick issued an injunction barring Daleiden from ever releasing the videos. Daleiden’s attorneys have argued that the content of the videos is of public interest, but Orrick, who has ties to Planned Parenthood, conducted his own review of the footage and determined there was no criminal activity committed, a determination disputed by OB-GYN and abortionist Forrest Smith, who reviewed the videos and said that Planned Parenthood violated standard medical practice.”

In October 2022, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a \$2.4 million judgment against Daleiden and others, rejecting their claim that the First Amendment shielded their actions. Circuit Judge Ronald Gould wrote that their actions violated laws applicable to all citizens, emphasizing that journalism does not provide immunity from generally applicable laws.

The videos sparked national debate about both abortion and the role of investigative journalism, leading to calls to defund Planned Parenthood and for various government agencies to conduct investigations into its practices. Daleiden later sued former California Attorney General Kamala Harris, alleging she unfairly targeted him for prosecution in response to his investigation. The lawsuit claimed that Harris, a pro-abortion advocate who had received campaign contributions from Planned Parenthood, sought to silence his reporting and deter others from similar investigations.

CMP has continued its ongoing efforts to expose Planned Parenthood’s selling of aborted baby body parts. In March 2024, the organization **revealed newly released documents**, obtained through a public records request, that revealed Planned Parenthood transferring “proprietary” aborted fetal body parts to UC San Diego in exchange for “valuable consideration” in a clear violation of federal law. In return, the organization gained ownership of the university’s “patents” and “intellectual property” developed through experiments using these fetal tissues.

“This new evidence shows Planned Parenthood sells late-term aborted baby body parts in violation of federal law, for far more money than has ever been discussed before,” stated Daleiden.

“Planned Parenthood’s national headquarters knew about and approved these sales of aborted babies for valuable consideration as part of government-funded research grants. The federal OIG investigation of fetal trafficking in Pittsburgh must be expanded to include Planned Parenthood’s activities in San Diego and every other location where this \$1.8 billion abortion business supplies aborted babies for taxpayer-funded

experiments. The highest levels of Planned Parenthood leadership must answer under oath for what we now know is the organization's participation in government-sponsored trafficking of late-term aborted babies," he said.



TAKEAWAY

Daleiden and Merritt have faced ongoing opposition and lawfare since releasing undercover videos that raised ethical and legal questions about abortion providers. Critics, including members of the media, have questioned his credibility as a journalist, dismissing his use of undercover tactics despite the long history of investigative reporting using similar methods.

The new legal victory marks a major change that Christians should celebrate. The case also reminds believers of the potential consequences and suffering that can and does result when we take bold action to protect life.

For more than a century, undercover journalism—conducted by both professional and citizen reporters—has played a **crucial role** in exposing corruption and illegal activities.

The controversy surrounding the footage raises broader questions. Why has there been such an aggressive attempt to prevent its release? If no wrongdoing occurred, transparency should be welcomed rather than avoided.

The recordings suggest that fetal tissue was being sold for profit, a claim that, if proven true, could have serious legal and ethical implications. Concerns over conflicts of interest have also surfaced, such as whether Judge William Orrick should have **recused himself** due to connections with a Planned Parenthood affiliate involved in fetal tissue procurement.

Many believe that shedding light on these practices is a moral obligation, echoing the principle of exposing wrongdoing rather than allowing it to continue in secrecy. Daleiden and Merritt's investigations have brought to light serious ethical concerns, and the resistance to their findings only deepens the debate over transparency and accountability in the abortion industry.

The biblical precedent of Ephesians 5:11 also applies, teaching believers, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."

Daleiden and Merritt have provided a powerful example of exposing the darkness while

also standing firm during the difficult controversies faced over several years of legal battles. With this settlement, their good and righteous work can now continue.