September 2026

Dear Texas Eagles,

What a summer this has been! Our "Don't Sharia My Texas" Lunch and Learn at the Republican State Convention was a breakout success. Amy "Mek" Mekelburg joined our panel, along with Kevin Freeman and others, to share a wealth of research on the problems of Islam in Texas and to paint a very clear picture of exactly what we are up against. Attendees overflowed into the hall and sat or stood three and four rows deep against the walls. Your prayers for a packed room were certainly answered!

During the convention, I spent the vast majority of my time serving on the Legislative Priorities Committee, working to make a strong, prescriptive plank on banning Sharia a top priority. We never want Texans or Americans subjected to laws and rules that come from a false god and a very flawed man. Islam and its Sharia law are a totalitarian system with the harshest of penalties. Its adherents seek worldwide dominance for an anti-constitutional, anti-women, and anti-liberty government. Sadly, so many of our elected officials are still behind on fully appreciating the threat this poses. That is why we are working on a comprehensive list of critical areas that must be protected from any incursion or influence by Sharia, and we will share our full list of priorities next month.

But this has also been a season of great personal loss. Several weeks ago, I lost my dad. He got me involved with political issues when I was very young and with Jesus when I was seventeen. He loved and supported his wife and family well. He gave his all to his Savior, who he met when he was 40. An unknowable number of people became believers because of his leadership and generosity after he met the Lord. I am grateful for the example he left and for the prayers so many of you have offered.

This month's issue of *The Torch* features an outstanding article by Sarah Erdős of the Texas Institute of Bioethics on commercial surrogacy in Texas. She traces the industry from the Baby M case in the 1980s to the present-day "wild west" of surrogacy contracts, foreign birth tourism, and children treated as designer goods to be bought. Texas has become one of the most favorable states for this booming business, with surrogate births nearly doubling since 2020. Erdős makes the case—clearly and compassionately—that the most vulnerable party is not the paying adult but the child who never chose the contract and the woman whose womb is treated as rental property. We commend this piece to you. Please read it, share it, and be prepared to speak when the Legislature takes up the exploitation of surrogacy in the session ahead.

So much is at stake in the upcoming elections. We must work hard to elect people who understand and support the values of our nation's founders. We must make certain they codify important executive orders into law at both the state and national levels. Montgomery County Eagle Forum has prepared a helpful tool for comparing candidates; please use it and share it with friends who want to vote with clarity.

continued on reverse ...

Looking ahead at the upcoming legislative session, we are excited to take your message directly to elected officials in Austin, but we need your help. Our donations are down, and we must rebuild our reserves to cover expenses while we work non-stop to pass or defeat bills in the upcoming session. I tend to be overly focused on research and necessary conversations and do not always make time for fundraising. But we do need funds, and we could use your help.

Texas Eagle Forum is also in need of more issue leaders. Please contact us if you are interested in specializing in any particular issue that impacts our families and are willing to spend time on research and occassionall traveling to Austin on behalf of TEF.

"From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands."
— Acts 17:26 (NIV)

We have been appointed to live in a critical time—a window that could make or break the amazing nation we have inherited. How are we stewarding that responsibility?

Thank you for your faithful financial support of Texas Eagle Forum and for standing with us in this important work. Thank you to those who continue to support our efforts—you are a tremendous blessing. Please reach out when you need extra copies of *The Torch* for friends, or if you would like to become more deeply involved with TEF.

We pray you and your family have a safe, blessed, and fruitful fall.

Faithfully,

Cindi Castilla

Cindi Castilla
President
Texas Eagle Forum

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THE TORCH
TEXAS EAGLE FORUM
September 2026

Commercial Surrogacy: Exploitation in the Lone Star State

By **Sarah Erdős**, *Texas Institute of Bioethics*

Mary Beth was in a panic. She slammed the doorknocker and twisted her hands nervously. It had been a whole 24 hours since she last saw her 3-day-old baby, but it felt like a lifetime. Was the baby crying behind this door, or was it just her imagination? The year was 1986, and America was about to get its first dramatic glimpse of trauma in surrogacy.

American Surrogacy in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Some historians have drawn the roots of modern American surrogacy back to 19th century slavery. Legal scholar Carla Spivack suggests that, "all African American slave women before the Civil War were surrogate mothers for their owners, gestating and giving birth to children who would not belong to them." Additionally, female slaves were sometimes required to assume the bodily roles of motherhood for their masters' biological children—serving as wet nurses and primary caregivers, and, in other cases, as concubines bearing their masters' heirs.



In the early 1970s, several American couples advertised for traditional surrogates by means of their local newspaper. With the advent of in vitro fertilization (IVF) in 1978, it was only a matter of time before the new technology became another pathway to surrogacy.

By 1985 the first successful gestational surrogate pregnancy was reported. The following year, commercial surrogacy made a dramatic appearance in American newspapers. Mary Beth Whitehead, a young married mother in New Jersey, had signed a contract to serve as a traditional surrogate for William and Betty Stern. Mrs. Whitehead was artificially inseminated with Mr. Stern's sperm and subsequently gave birth to a daughter, "Baby M," whose appearance reminded her of her older daughter. Continued Page 2 >

IN THIS ISSUE

Commercial Surrogacy ... 1-3
Eagle Eye on News ... 4

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Just one night after relinquishing the 3-day-old newborn to the Sterns, Whitehead came to their home in such emotional distress that they agreed to let her spend an additional week with the baby. She subsequently fled the state.

Following a search for the infant, her forcible removal by police, and several years of legal battles, the New Jersey Supreme Court declared the Sterns' surrogacy contract null. Pertaining to Mrs. Stern's desire to adopt her husband's child, the court concluded, "There are, in a civilized society, some things that money cannot buy …be it labor, love, or life."

Cui Bono? Who benefits?

Proponents of surrogacy portray it as just another way to build a family, sharing the stories of infertile couples who just want a child with a genetic connection to themselves. But current data suggests that this scenario is not often the case.

Healthy celebrities, including Paris Hilton, Kim Kardashian, and Nicole Kidman, often make headlines by using paid surrogates to avoid pregnancy. And thanks to the prevalence of third-party gametes, singles or couples from the U.S. and abroad shop online for egg and sperm, building 'designer babies' that meet their desired physical criteria.

Intended parents often spend more than $200,000 per pregnancy to procure a child or children, in almost all cases without a third-party home study to verify parental fitness, such as would be required in the case of adoption. The state tracks almost no data on these arrangements or the well-being of the parties involved.

First-time surrogate base compensation ranges between $45-70k, while experienced surrogates command a premium. A 2025 report to the United Nations noted that "most surrogates receive only 10-27% of total payments; agencies and brokers pocket the rest."

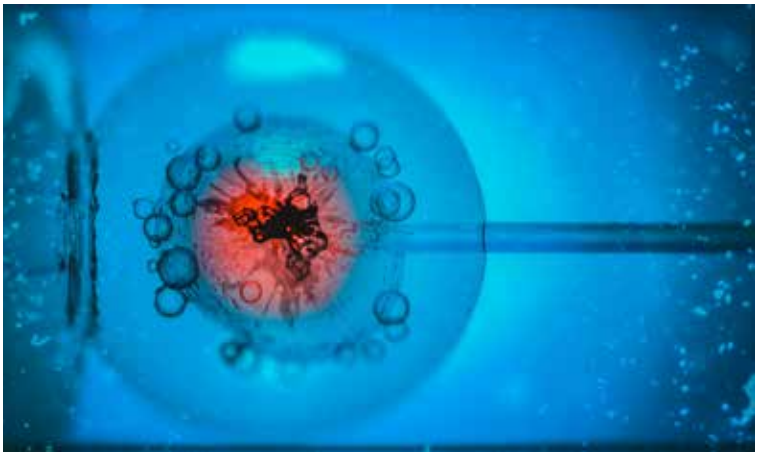
Reports of exploitation in the gamete industry could fill a book. Often erroneously referred to as "donations," the sale of sperm and eggs has become big business in the U.S. The eugenic implications are hard to ignore. In August, the UK's Independent reported that young women at elite universities are "being targeted to sell their eggs to overseas IVF clinics to pay their [college] fees." 'Successful' donors in the U.S. stand to make around $10,000, which can feel like a lifeline for a struggling student. But many painful facts are overlooked in the glossy marketing material that has become prevalent on college campuses.

In 2015, a *World Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* study raised concerns about the economic costs of surrogacy and the "moral hazard" which occurs when the system that helps create the higher risk pregnancy also stands to profit from it. For instance, the state of California reported that between 35% and 40% of surrogate-born infants were born prematurely in 2011 and 2012. Loma Linda University Children's Hospital reported that "among singletons and twins (per infant) hospital charges were increased 26 times and in triplets charges were increased 173 times when compared to a term infant provided care in a normal nursery at our center."

America's New Wild West

Commercial surrogacy made national headlines again this summer when Alaska surrogate McKenna West fled to Texas to give birth over the objections of Nausheen Gilkar and Omar Ahmed, the California couple who commissioned her pregnancy. The baby she carried had been diagnosed with a rare heart condition, and the intended parents demanded she have an abortion, per their contract. West, who was 23 weeks pregnant at the time, refused, and instead flew to Texas where an abortion could not legally be obtained and offered to raise the baby herself.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton intervened, and a Texas hospital was ordered to perform life-saving open-heart surgery after the baby's birth on August 12, 2026. But West has been denied access to the child. She offered to relinquish all claims if his parents would pledge to make every effort to save his life, but they declined.



As of this writing, Baby Rumi remains in critical condition in a Texas hospital, but the commissioning parents may be moving him into hospice out-of-state, and they are suing West for breach of contract. Meanwhile, West has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court for access to the baby. Just as it was in 1986 when Mary Beth kidnapped her own daughter, surrogacy remains the wild west of law, reproductive technology, and ethics.

Commercial Surrogacy in Texas - Booming Business

While commercial surrogacy is banned in all 27 European Union nations, Canada, and the UK (some permit altruistic surrogacy), the United States has no federal regulations governing commercial surrogacy. Instead, laws vary from state-to-state and frequently change. Louisiana currently bans commercial surrogacy outright, five (5) other states make it difficult, and the rest recognize private surrogacy contracts in varying degrees.

Texas is widely considered one of the most favorable states for commercial surrogacy due to favorable statutory framework (Chapter 160 of the Texas Family Code) and lower cost of living. At a hearing in the Texas Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, the Director of Vital Statistics and State Registrar Dr. Tara Das reported 657 infants born to surrogates in 2025, nearly double the number of surrogate births in the state in 2020. Only California boasts more surrogacy pregnancies each year.

In March 2026, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick charged the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services with "combating the exploitation of surrogacy" in Texas. Since then, lawmakers have been working to understand the issue and how to address it.

At July's hearing in the Texas Senate, Jennifer Lahl, founder of the Center for Bioethics and Culture Network, testified:

[The] contract is at the heart of the surrogacy industry. These contracts prioritize those paying for or profiting from the arrangement. They also regulate a surrogate's behavior, ability to travel, important medical decisions, and even require compliance with selective reduction or termination [abortion] clauses, where permitted by law. Financial penalties are tied to compliance. If she fails to obey, she is threatened with breach of contract and will have to return all money she has received and more. …pregnancy is not a service. A woman's womb is not a rental property, and a child is not a product to be bought and sold.

Later in that same hearing, a fertility attorney used the phrase "the most vulnerable party." Committee Chair Senator Lois Kolkhorst stopped to ask who the most vulnerable party was. The attorney responded that it was the intended parents: after all, they had invested significant financial resources in the success of the arrangement.

Definitions

Traditional Surrogacy - the surrogate mother uses her own egg which is fertilized via artificial insemination.

Gestational Surrogacy (most common) - the surrogate mother is not the biological mother; a human embryo is created via in vitro fertilization and transferred into the surrogate mother.

Commercial Surrogacy - the process of surrogacy monetized for compensation, profit, or any other reason.

Surrogate - a woman who carries a pregnancy on behalf of another person or couple.

Intended Parent(s) - the individual or couple who contracts the services of a surrogate with the intention of receiving custody of the child or children after delivery, also known as Commissioning Parent.

In-vitro fertilization (IVF) - the process in which an egg and sperm are combined outside the body to create a new human embryo.

Third-Party Reproduction - the use of egg or sperm (gametes) from a third-party (not the intended parents); often referred to as 'donor gametes,' but nearly always bought and sold.

I'd like to suggest that the vulnerable party in a surrogacy arrangement is someone else. It's the one who doesn't have a lawyer, doesn't have money to begin with, and cannot testify in any hearings. It's the person whose birth is being contracted, and who, by contract, will likely be separated from their biological identity, and the woman who bore them, for life. And because birth certificates in Texas have no requirement of biological accuracy in surrogacy cases, unless their 'commissioning parents' chose to tell them the truth about their origins, they may never know.

Surrogacy is a grand experiment in which our common understanding of a 'mother' is deliberately sliced into thirds: an egg donor, a 'carrier,' and the social mother. Many adults who were conceived in this manner have expressed the alienation they feel from this severing.

Our laws and reproductive technologies should take ethics into account, and our growing understanding of human attachment must inform the tender questions surrounding human origin. *The Atlantic* reported just this month, "Most of Europe has banned commercial surrogacy. The United Nations likens [commercial surrogacy] to slavery. But in the United States, business is booming."

Is that the way things ought to be in Texas? •••

Sarah Erdős is a wife and mother of four, and former producer of Eagle Forum Live, Phyllis Schlafly's national radio show. She published a thesis on commercial surrogacy in 2018 and is the founder of Texas Institute of Bioethics, an organization promoting ethical approaches in Texas public policy.

To learn more, visit them online at www.txbioethics.org

EAGLE *Eye on News*

Talarico Doubles Down on Abortion - Democratic U.S. Senate candidate James Talarico reiterated his belief that the Bible doesn't prohibit abortion. In an interview with podcaster Jamie Kern Lima in March, Talarico explained his views "as a Presbyterian seminarian" and how he "arrived at them from a biblical perspective." According to Talarico's logic: "Jesus never talks about abortion. The Bible is silent on abortion... I trust Texas women to make decisions about their own bodies, to shape their own destinies.. And that's a belief I hold not despite my faith, but because of my faith." Despite claiming the Bible is silent on abortion, Talarico has used Scripture, including the story of the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke, to defend his pro-abortion views. Talarico also claimed the Bible rejects the idea of "embryonic personhood," likening embryos to any other cell or bacteria in the human body. In a 2016 op-ed, Talarico's pastor, Jim Rigby, compared aborted babies to "extracted teeth." SOURCE: Jon Brown, ChristianPost.com, May 26, 2026.

Surrogacy Has Dangerous Implications for Families and Nations - As pro-lifers, we have fought against the evils of abortion for decades and have come alongside expectant mothers who have chosen life. Our passion does not stop at the pregnancy or after the baby is born. The mother and baby's quality of life from womb to tomb matters greatly. This is why we are sounding the alarm on surrogacy. Time and time again, surrogacy has allowed women to be used as tools and the babies are used as pawns for power. Just like the abortion industry, surrogacy is coercive and leaves long-term ill effects for mother and baby.

In addition to domestic surrogacy in the United States, foreign actors are using American women to have their children. Chinese billionaire Xu Bo has more than 100 children born to surrogates in the United States and is seeking to have more. Online, he claims he wants "50 high-quality sons" and 20 U.S. born children to inherit his gaming business. He sees his "children" as future employees who will give him access to the U.S. This sickening trend is growing rapidly. The website Expecting.Ai just launched the world's largest database available in Chinese. Access to surrogates around the world is as easy as a click of a button now. But the other side of this is even worse — men have full access to these women's bodies around the world. This is a major humanitarian and national security issue.

Representative Scott Perry (R-PA) has been a champion on this issue and has introduced two bills to address this crisis. Rep. Perry stated in a press release: *With regard to the international commercial surrogacy process — or 'birth tourism' — it's being exploited by wealthy foreigners who get the benefits of children who later provide dual citizenship for the foreign parent. The fact that a foreign national can just order babies from the U.S. — 200 in one case from China — and just drive somewhere to pick up their unseen, unknown child like a cheeseburger is ethically and morally outrageous, and it's also imperiling our National security. This is child exploitation at minimum, slavery and child trafficking at worst, and a means by which our adversaries can gain future access to our Country. There's a reason so many other countries ban 'birth tourism' — ironically, China is one of them. It's ludicrous that nothing's been done here to stop this thus far.* SOURCE: Tabitha Walter, EagleForum.com, August 2026.

GREAT AMERICAN QUOTE

"There is no love like a mother's – she who carries the child that God knits in the womb, she who nourishes and guides, she who teaches and inspires, she who gives of her heart and soul and self for the good and the happiness of her children and her family."

Ronald Reagan

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Psalm 139: 15-16 (NLT)

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