

CBS Mornings

09/16/26

7:00:14 a.m. [TEASE]

7 seconds

GAYLE KING: Plus, a Texas family tells a heartbreaking story about a woman who died after allegedly being denied an abortion.

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7:00:52 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Lawsuit Targets Paxton]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: A woman's family is suing Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and state officials, blaming strict abortion limits for her death.

LATANYA WALKER: They just didn't care. They didn't care at all.

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7:20:59 p.m. [TEASE]

16 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Lawsuit Targets Paxton]

DUTHIERS: Coming up, Ken Paxton and other Texas officials are the target of a new lawsuit that blames them and doctors for a woman's death. It's putting women's health and the state's strict abortion limits back into the spotlight ahead of the midterms. Jericka Duncan talks to the woman's aunt, who says the doctor treating her niece should be locked up.

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7:30:13 a.m.

8 minutes and 32 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Exclusive; Ken Paxton Among Those Sued in Abortion Lawsuit]

KING: Right now, there is an unprecedented legal battle taking place in the state of Texas over the state's very restrictive abortion laws. A new lawsuit is taking aim at Texas Attorney General — that's Ken Paxton, a political candidate in one of the most closely watched Senate races in this country. So, Paxton is named along with other Texas officials and doctors who are being blamed for the death of Tierra Walker. She died in December of 2024 from a pregnancy complication after her family says she was denied an abortion multiple times. They now blame her death on

what they call the culture of fear over abortion laws in the State of Texas. In an exclusive interview, Walker's aunt sat down with our Jericka Duncan. Jericka, good morning. I'm very curious about this story.

JERICKA DUNCAN: Yeah, good morning to you. Good morning to everyone. This is a unique case that puts those strict laws back in the spotlight. The family of Tierra Walker is trying to hold all parties responsible for her death, but I met with her family on Monday, her husband, her son, and her mother were too distraught to speak. But we were able to speak to her aunt, who often accompanied Tierra to the hospital. She explained why she believes this death was preventable.

WALKER: Tierra was the light. She was everything.

DUNCAN: Latanya Walker says her niece, Tierra, should still be alive.

WALKER: They mistreated her so bad in the hospital.

DUNCAN: In September of 2024, 37-year-old Tierra Walker learned she was pregnant. Her husband and teenage son were excited by the news. But early on, Tierra reported having seizures, nausea, and severe pain. Of the 103 days she knew she was pregnant, records show nearly half were spent in hospitals being treated by more than 100 doctors.

WALKER: They already know what they're supposed to do and they don't do nothing. I'm arguing, I'm fussing, I'm cussing. They just didn't care. They didn't care at all. At all.

DUNCAN [TO WALKER]: When you say they knew what they were supposed to do but they didn't do it, what do you mean by that?

WALKER: Because I asked them time and time again to give her an abortion, and they would tell me, it's her, but it's not the baby. We're not worried about the baby. It's her.

DUNCAN: Medical records also show that her health problems, including blood clots and high blood pressure, were so dire that two doctors warned she was at high risk of death. During Tierra's final visit to the ER in late December, she was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia, a serious blood pressure condition that can be fatal, but she was discharged hours later. Days later, her son found her unresponsive on his 15th birthday. An autopsy report revealed her death was caused in part by pre-eclampsia. She was 20 weeks pregnant. [TO WALKER] How difficult was it for you to hear that news?

WALKER: I was mad. Because I know all the time that she was going to die if she didn't get the help she needed.

DUNCAN: CBS News reviewed thousands of pages of Tierra's medical records, and there are no references to ending the pregnancy.

MOLLY DUANE: No one has viewed more post-*Roe* medical records than Michelle and I. They

never say the word abortion. They're scared to even write the word in the medical chart.

DUNCAN [TO DUANE]: So you think that's on purpose?

DUANE: Oh, absolutely.

DUNCAN: Attorneys Michelle Maloney and Molly Duane represent the Walker family in a lawsuit filed Tuesday. They're suing Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, the head of the Texas medical board, some of Tierra's doctors, and others. [TO MALONEY] Why do you think Tierra Walker is dead?

MICHELLE MALONEY: Tierra is dead because not one of her health care providers would give her the one medical procedure that would have saved her life, and they would not do that because of the immense culture of fear that has been created in the state of Texas.

DUNCAN [TO MALONEY]: How do you know what these doctors were thinking?

MALONEY: The only reason that you would not give her an abortion is if you wanted her to die, which I don't think was the case, or if you were scared of the law.

DUNCAN: In Texas, abortions are banned with few exceptions if the mother's life is at risk. However, doctors could lose their medical licenses, face fines, and risk up to 99 years behind bars if they violate state law.

STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON (R-TX): All Texas is trying to do is protect the unborn.

DUNCAN: Texas Attorney General Paxton has been advocating against abortions for years. He's also now running against democratic candidate James Talarico in a highly competitive Senate race.

DUANE: We're not concerned with politics. We're concerned with seeking justice for a family that is grieving.

DUNCAN [TO DUANE AND MALONEY]: And, just to be clear, for the record, you all haven't spoken to anyone from Talarico's campaign?

[DUANE SHAKES HEAD]

MALONEY: No.

DUNCAN [TO MALONEY]: I would imagine Ken Paxton might say, as the Texas attorney general, his job is to enforce the law, and that this ban is the law. So, why is he at fault?

MALONEY: Ken Paxton is involved in this lawsuit because he went above and beyond in

enforcing the law to create a culture of fear that was so pervasive that doctors refused to even provide legally permissive care.

DUNCAN: Dr. Emily Briggs is an ob/gyn who was not connected to the Walker case and has been practicing medicine in Texas for 17 years.

EMILY BRIGGS: Because of these rules, we now have a whole team of people who are in between me and my patient making a decision. In this era, it has been heart-wrenching to not be able to counsel my patients on appropriate medical options for fear of all these ramifications.

WALKER: She was a great mother.

DUNCAN: For the Walker family, the grief is still raw, and Latanya says she hopes their story is heard by doctors and public officials, including Ken Paxton. [TO WALKER] What would you say to him if he's listening?

WALKER: Honestly, go to hell. You killed my niece.

DUNCAN [TO WALKER]: To the more than 90 doctors that were involved, the nurses, what do you say to them?

WALKER: I feel they should be locked up.

DUNCAN: CBS News reached out to the doctors, Attorney General Ken Paxton, and UT Health. None of them responded to our request for comment on this lawsuit. In a statement, University Health said its "priority is to provide medically appropriate and timely care...while complying with all applicable laws and regulations." The Texas Medical Board said, in a statement, its rules and the law make clear that "the absence of an imminent risk of death should not prevent a physician from providing medically necessary care."

KING: If you're listening — if you're the family hearing that, it just sounds like white noise to you because your loved one is gone.

NATE BURLESON: Right.

DUNCAN: Yeah.

KING: And it's so heartbreaking to me. There seem to be so many things that could have prevented her death —

DUTHIERS: So many failures, right.

KING: — starting with, why was she released from the hospital with pre-eclampsia? Let's just start with that.

DUNCAN: That's a question for those doctors. Gayle, we spoke to several of them.

KING: Oh, my gosh.

DUNCAN: They said it looks like she did not receive the proper care. We reached out to the CEO of the pro-life ob/gyn in this country and basically said the same thing in that this was likely preventable, but they blamed it on the care and not on the Texas abortion.

DUTHIERS: Well, so, the physicians, it sounds like, did have legal authority to intervene. The Texas medical board told you the person does not have to be on the verge of death for them to intervene medically, and that could mean if somebody is potentially in a life — situation where they may lose their life, you can provide that care, including an abortion.

DUNCAN: But as you heard from that Texas doctor that was not connected to this case, there is, according to her and other doctors, this element of fear. It's your livelihood, your medical license, it's a potential fine if you're seen as aiding and abetting. But consider this. In Texas since that inaction of the abortion bans, there were about 50,000 abortions in the state of Texas before the bans took effect, and now there are about 85 each year

BURLESON: Ooooo.

KING: You know, when I think of her son finding his mother unresponsive —

BURLESON: Oh man, Gayle.

KING: — and dying on his 15th birthday —

BURLESON: Oh, man, heartbreaking.

KING: — it's heartbreaking but also maddening.

BURLESON: Yeah, especially when you hear the words —

KING: Also maddening.

BURLESON: — preventable.

KING: Yes, yes, yes.

DUTHIERS: Tierra Walker, thank you for bringing her story, Jericka, to us and to our audience. We appreciate it.