

Coalition Statement Opposing Reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule
June 2015

We join together as diverse voices from a variety of sectors to oppose any effort to reinstate the harmful global gag rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy. While the Helms Amendment restricts U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortions “as a method of family planning,” the global gag rule goes a step further by preventing foreign organizations using their own funds to provide information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or to advocate for access to abortion services in their own country from receiving U.S. international family planning assistance.

The global gag rule causes serious harm in countries around the world. The policy interferes with the doctor-patient relationship by restricting medical information healthcare providers may offer, limits free speech by prohibiting local citizens from participating in public policy debates, and impedes women's access to family planning by cutting off funding for many of the most experienced health care providers who have chosen to prioritize quality reproductive-health services and counseling over funding that restricts care and censors information.

When in place, the negative impacts of the global gag rule have been broad and severe: health services have been dismantled in a number of communities; clinics that provided a range of reproductive, maternal, and child health care, including HIV testing and counseling, were forced to close; outreach efforts to hard to reach populations were eliminated; and access to contraceptives was severely limited, resulting in more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. Here is the testimony of one organization that experienced the impact of the global gag rule when it was last in place:

“After refusing the terms of the gag rule in 2001, at Family Health Options Kenya we lost a significant amount of funding from USAID with serious and damaging effects on our ability to provide crucial reproductive health and family planning services. We were forced to close six clinics, all of which provided critical services to poor and underserved populations in urban, peri-urban and rural areas including family planning, voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, management of sexually transmitted infections, post-abortion care and maternal and child health services. Following the closure of these clinics in 2005, at least 9,000 people – primarily women and children – were left with little or no access to health care.” - FHOK, 2013

Countries around the world are making significant progress in improving women's health and bringing back this harmful policy would undermine that momentum. Developing and donor countries alike are stepping up to prioritize and make tangible headway in closing the gap on access to modern family planning through increased funding and better policies. This momentum, which includes global partnerships like Family Planning 2020, builds on the essential foundation of U.S. investments in this sector. A reinstatement of the gag rule would seriously hinder the effectiveness of U.S. global health investments and the growing global progress that we, as a global community, have made in expanding access to family planning for couples worldwide and in reducing maternal mortality.

The U.S. should be a leader when it comes to promoting democracy, women's health, and human rights around the world. U.S. foreign aid should never be used as a tool to limit women's access to health care or to censor free speech. Organizations should not be disqualified from receiving U.S. assistance because they use their own funds to provide health services and information that are legal in their home country and legal in the U.S. **Supporters of women's health and free speech must oppose the harmful global gag rule and we call on Congress to reject all efforts to again impose this policy on women around the world.**

Endorsing Organizations:

1. Advocates for Youth
2. AIDS Foundation of Chicago
3. AIDS United
4. American Association of University Women (AAUW)
5. American Civil Liberties Union
6. American Humanist Association
7. American Jewish World Service
8. amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research)
9. Amnesty International USA
10. AVAC
11. Black Women's Health Imperative
12. CARE USA
13. Catholics for Choice
14. Center for Biological Diversity
15. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
16. Center for Reproductive Rights
17. Center for Women Policy Studies
18. Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
19. Disciple Public Witness; Disciples of Christ
20. Disciples for Choice
21. Disciples Justice Action Network
22. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
23. EngenderHealth
24. Family Care International
25. Feminist Majority
26. Global Doctors for Choice
27. Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)
28. Healthy Teen Network
29. Institute for Science and Human Values
30. International Center for Research on Women
31. International Planned Parenthood Federation
32. International Planned Parenthood/Western Hemisphere Region
33. International Women's Health Coalition
34. IntraHealth International
35. Ipas
36. John Snow, Inc.
37. JWJ
38. Lutheran Women's Caucus
39. Management Sciences for Health
40. Marie Stopes International-US
41. Medical Students for Choice
42. Methodist Federation for Social Action
43. NARAL Pro-Choice America
44. National Abortion Federation
45. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
46. National Center for Lesbian Rights
47. National Council of Jewish Women
48. National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
49. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
50. National LGBTQ Task Force
51. National Organization for Women
52. National Partnership for Women & Families
53. National Women's Law Center
54. PAI
55. Partners for Development
56. Pathfinder International
57. Physicians for Reproductive Health
58. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
59. Population Connection Action Fund
60. Population Council
61. Population Institute
62. Population Services International
63. Positive Women's Network - USA
64. Religious Institute
65. Reproductive Health Technologies Project
66. Sierra Club
67. SisterLove, Inc.
68. Society for Humanistic Judaism
69. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
70. Union for Reform Judaism
71. Unitarian Universalist Association
72. Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
73. United Methodist General Board of Church & Society
74. URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
75. WIN (Women's Information Network)
76. Women of Reform Judaism
77. Women Thrive Worldwide
78. Women's Refugee Commission
79. Women's Research & Education Institute