

June 18, 2014

Dear Senator:

The Global Gag Rule has undermined family planning services in the developing world for thirty years. It's time to get rid of this misguided, counterproductive policy once and for all.

That's why we urge you to support the Shaheen Amendment to the FY 2015 State Department, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Appropriations bill when it is considered by the Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

The Shaheen Amendment will prevent a future imposition of the Global Gag Rule, a policy that denies U.S. international family planning assistance to foreign organizations that use their non-U.S. funds to provide information, referrals, or access to legal abortion, or advocate for changes in their country's abortion laws. The gag rule cuts off funding to some of the most effective, experienced, and respected providers of contraceptive supplies, family planning information, and reproductive health care services in the developing world.

As you know, the Global Gag Rule has been imposed by Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan in 1984 and rescinded when a Democrat sits in the Oval Office. It is certainly better for women when it is not in effect, but the knowledge that it could return is itself a hindrance to organizations seeking to serve women.

The Shaheen Amendment has passed in previous years with bipartisan support. The amendment will set a simple standard – one that reflects core American values: the United States should not use its aid to interfere with the provision of health care services that are legal both in our country and in the country those services are being provided, and never should the U.S. require a foreign non-governmental organization to give up its right to speak out about important policy issues as a condition of receiving aid.

We support the Shaheen Amendment because it's an important step toward ensuring that women around the world have consistent access to quality family planning and reproductive health care – no matter who sits in the White House in Washington DC.

Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Catholics for Choice
Center for Health & Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women Policy Studies
Communications Consortium Media Center
EngenderHealth

Family Care International
Feminist Majority Foundation
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Human Rights Watch
International Center for Research on Women
International Women's Health Coalition
Ipas
John Snow, Inc.
Management Sciences for Health
Metropolitan Community Churches
MSI-US
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Council of Jewish Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Organization for Women
Pathfinder International
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Action International
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Council
Population Institute
Population Services International (PSI)
Public Health Institute
Religious Institute
Sierra Club
The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society