

EIGHT FACTS

ABOUT THE Global Gag Rule



Ever since the Global Gag Rule (also known as the Mexico City Policy) was first introduced in 1984, conservative U.S. politicians have used abortion politics in the U.S. to block access to contraceptives for women in developing countries. Over and over again, they have distorted the facts and ignored the realities faced by the 215 million women in developing countries who do not want to become pregnant, but lack access to contraception. Congress is now trying to permanently reinstate the Global Gag Rule, using some of these same fictions. Don't be fooled. **Get the facts.**

1 **FICTION** The Global Gag Rule prevents your tax dollars from being spent on abortion

"It is my conviction that taxpayer funds should not be used to pay for abortions...either here or abroad." – *Former President George W. Bush in 2001, explaining why he supported the Global Gag Rule*

"Americans do not want federal tax dollars being used for abortions. This applies to our foreign aid as well as our domestic agenda." – *Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison in 1997, arguing for the reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule*

FACT The Global Gag Rule is not about funding abortion

President Bush and congressional opponents of family planning misled Americans by saying the Global Gag Rule affects whether tax dollars are spent on abortion.

The Helms Amendment, passed in 1973, already prevents any U.S. tax dollars from funding abortion overseas. Similarly, the Hyde Amendment prohibits using tax dollars for abortion domestically.

The truth is that the Global Gag Rule prevents U.S. funding from going to any organization that provides abortion information, referrals or services with their own, non-U.S. funding. It takes critical funding and contraceptives away from family planning providers abroad. 215 million women in developing countries want to prevent pregnancy but need contraception. The Gag Rule blocks efforts to meet the needs of these women.

2 **FICTION** The Global Gag Rule does not affect family planning funding

"Under the Mexico City policy, funding for family planning was not reduced one penny." – *Rep. Chris Smith, January 2009*

FACT The Global Gag Rule prevents funding of some of the best family planning providers

Family planning providers in developing countries lost access to U.S.-donated contraceptives and hundreds of thousands of dollars in U.S. funding under the Gag Rule, leading to staff layoffs and clinic closures. In many communities, women lost their only source of family planning services.

3 **FICTION** The Global Gag Rule reduces the number of abortions in developing countries

"When [President Obama] rescinded President George W. Bush's 'Mexico City Policy' executive order... he didn't reduce the number of abortions—he vastly increased them." – *Wanda Franz, President of the National Right to Life Committee, June 2009*

FACT The Global Gag Rule restricts access to family planning, increasing unplanned pregnancies and abortions

The Gag Rule does not reduce the number of women seeking abortions. The Gag Rule can actually lead to more abortions by increasing the number of women who have unplanned pregnancies.

The Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) saw 50 percent more women come to their clinics for post-abortion care the year after the Gag Rule was reinstated by the Bush administration, according to former PPAG director Joana Nerquaye-Tetteh.

By rescinding the Gag Rule, President Obama helped expand access to family planning services that can prevent unplanned pregnancies and reduce the need for abortion. Fulfilling the need for family planning of 215 million women in developing countries would prevent 53 million unintended pregnancies and 14.5 million unsafe abortions each year.

4 **FICTION** Family planning is code for abortion

"Our foreign aid programs should not subsidize organizations that perform and promote abortions in developing nations under the guise of "family planning." – *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, letter to the U.S. Foreign relations committee, 2001*

FACT Family planning is not abortion

Contraception is not abortion. Family planning methods include condoms, injectable contraceptives, implants, IUDs, and the birth control pill. Family planning programs give couples the information and power to time and space their pregnancies, resulting in healthier families and fewer unwanted pregnancies and abortions.



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FICTION

The Global Gag Rule protects the health of women in developing countries

“Poor women in developing nations need adequate education, food, housing, and medicine for themselves and their children, so they can lead lives of full human dignity. The Mexico City policy prevents the United States from exporting and encouraging a culture of death as a supposed answer to these needs.”
– *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, letter to the U.S. Foreign relations committee, 2001*

FACT

Family planning helps women lead healthier lives

Family planning programs save lives, and often serve as entry points for many women to access the entire health system. By impeding access to family planning, the Global Gag Rule harms women’s health and weakens efforts to reduce maternal deaths worldwide. Every year, an estimated 350,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth; 99 percent of these deaths occur in the developing world and the majority are preventable. Getting contraceptives to the 215 million women that want them would prevent 251,000 pregnancy-related deaths and 1.7 million newborn deaths each year.

6

FICTION

Family planning programs do not help prevent HIV and STIs

“Some opponents have claimed it is necessary to reverse the Mexico City Policy to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS internationally. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Mexico City policy has no effect on family planning spending generally, let alone on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.” – *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, letter to the U.S. Foreign relations committee, 2001*

FACT

Family planning programs provide people with the information and tools they need to practice safe sex and protect themselves from STIs, including HIV

According to the World Health Organization, condoms are the “best defense” in preventing HIV, and studies have found them to be 98 percent effective in preventing transmission of the virus. Under the Global Gag Rule, key family planning providers lost access to U.S.-donated condoms, resulting in stockouts.

Family planning providers have the expertise to counsel individuals about safer sex, and screen for, treat, and prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. The Gag Rule prevented the United States from working with some of the most effective partners serving two of the populations at greatest risk of HIV/AIDS—women and youth.



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FICTION

The Global Gag Rule protects the sovereignty of developing countries

“President (Obama’s) decision will shift U.S. funding from true family planning programs to programs that provide and promote abortion with little or no regard for the sovereignty of democratic nations that oppose abortion as a method of family planning.” – *Rep. Chris Smith, January 2009*

FACT

The Global Gag Rule forces health providers in other countries to ignore their own domestic laws and conform to a U.S. political agenda

The Gag Rule undermines the sovereignty of developing countries by forcing health providers in these countries to disregard laws set in place by their own governments. Many of the same countries receiving USAID family planning assistance also have legal abortion. Indeed, the global trend is toward laws that support more comprehensive access to reproductive health services.

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FICTION

The Global Gag Rule prevents the U.S. from trying to pressure other countries into legalizing abortion

“Under the threat of withholding aid, these (family planning) organizations seek to pressure foreign countries into making abortion legal.”
– *Wanda Franz, President of the National Right to Life Committee, February 2009*

“The U.S. government will no longer be using taxpayer dollars to try to legalize abortion in countries in Latin America, Africa, and Muslim countries in which the people are strongly opposed to abortion and believe in the protection of unborn children.”
– *Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee speaking about the reinstatement of the Gag Rule, 2001*

FACT

The Global Gag Rule stifles free speech in developing countries and would be unconstitutional in the U.S

The Gag Rule strips doctors and organizations in developing countries of the right to advocate within their own governments for laws that reflect their needs.

The Gag Rule strips these women of the right to advocate with their own government for laws that reflect their needs. It requires private organizations overseas to choose between continuing their non-U.S. funded efforts to change public policy around abortion, and receiving U.S. family planning funds. In the U.S., it would be unconstitutional to base an organization’s eligibility for federal funds on whether it would give up its rights to exercise free speech and participate in the political process.