

Friday, June 22, 2007

Victory (is) in the House!

Washington, DC - June 25, 2007

Population Action International celebrated an important victory for women and their families last week, as Congress passed a Foreign Operations Appropriations bill ([H.R. 2764](#)) that contained language correcting some of the most egregious aspects of U.S. international sexual and reproductive health policy.

Despite attacks by family planning and reproductive health opponents, two important provisions survived:

- An amendment put forth by Foreign Operations Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) that exempts overseas NGO family planning providers from the restrictions of the [Global Gag Rule](#) (Mexico City Policy) that cuts off the flow of U.S.-donated contraceptives and condoms.
- A provision that repeals the abstinence-only funding restrictions under [PEPFAR](#) (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) that require at least one-third of all U.S. HIV/AIDS prevention funding be limited to abstinence programs.

Three amendments that came up on the House floor were vigorously debated: the aforementioned [Lowey Amendment](#), the [Smith-Stupak Amendment](#) that would have nullified the Lowey Amendment, and the [Pitts Amendment](#) that would have preserved the abstinence funding restriction.

Some of the most powerful statements on the House floor came from Members who identify themselves as anti-abortion but understand that these changes in U.S. policy would help **prevent** abortion and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Both provisions were upheld with support from both Democrats and Republicans, including some Members who in the past have not been as supportive.

President Bush has vowed to veto the entire \$34.2 billion foreign assistance spending bill over the new contraceptives language. This week, the Senate is expected to begin work on its version of the appropriations bill. Indications are that they will include similar provisions on the Gag Rule and HIV/AIDS. Once the Senate completes its work on the bill in July, the bill will then go to a conference committee. There, the House and Senate versions will be reconciled and sent to the President for his approval or veto.

So while there are still hurdles to overcome before these provisions can become law, we are celebrating this victory for women and their families around the world. It is a long overdue and much needed dose of common sense when it comes to U.S. assistance on family planning and HIV/AIDS.

Population Action International (PAI) works to improve individual well-being and preserve global resources by mobilizing political and financial support for population, family planning and reproductive health policies and programs.

To read the debate on the House Floor, click [here](#).

To hear Friday's story on National Public Radio, click [here](#).

[http://www.populationaction.org/Press_Room/Viewpoints_and_Statements/2007/Victory_\(is\)_in_the_House!.shtml](http://www.populationaction.org/Press_Room/Viewpoints_and_Statements/2007/Victory_(is)_in_the_House!.shtml)