

Global Democracy Promotion Act (HR4879/S 311)

NCJW MESSAGE: NCJW strongly supports the Global Democracy Promotion Act (S 311), a bill that would permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule. In his first days in office, President Obama rescinded this harmful policy. However, without passage of the Global Democracy Promotion Act, an anti-family planning president could quickly reinstate this dangerous policy. A permanent, legislative repeal is necessary to ensure that women worldwide have access to critical family planning services and information.

TALKING POINTS:

- ▶ **The Global Gag Rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy, denied US government funding for family planning** to agencies abroad that provided abortion information, referrals, or services, even if they were paid for with funds from a different source. This policy has been overturned and reinstated three times since it was first implemented by the Reagan Administration in 1984.
- ▶ **Access to international family planning must not serve as a political football—the need for comprehensive information and services is far too great.** There are approximately 215 million women around the world who would like to prevent unintended pregnancies but do not have access to modern contraceptives.
- ▶ **The Global Gag Rule interfered with the doctor-patient relationship, compromising the quality of health care women received.** To protect and strengthen the health and well-being of women, children, and families, doctors must be able to provide women with the full range of reproductive health options and information. Under the Global Gag Rule, their voices were silenced for fear of losing much-needed US funding.
- ▶ **The Global Gag Rule undermined the right to free speech** by prohibiting organizations abroad from receiving US funding if they were involved with advocating for or raising awareness about safer abortion practices in their own countries. There were no restrictions on organizations speaking out against abortion access.
- ▶ **The Global Democracy Promotion Act (HR4879/S 311) would increase access to international family planning** by ensuring that the most experienced and best-equipped foreign nongovernmental health organizations are eligible for US foreign assistance, regardless of how they choose to spend their private funds.
- ▶ **The Global Democracy Promotion Act would protect the ability of foreign organizations to speak out for access to safe abortions** by ensuring that foreign nongovernmental organizations are never ineligible for US foreign assistance simply because they lobby their government for policies to increase access to safe and legal abortions.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What would the Global Democracy Promotion Act do? The Global Democracy Promotion Act would permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule, allowing international nongovernmental organizations that use their own non-US funds to provide abortion services and/or information and referrals to be eligible for US funding. It would also ensure that advocacy for access to safe and legal abortions would not disqualify an organization from receiving US foreign assistance.

President Obama rescinded the Global Gag Rule. Why do we need a permanent repeal? Without a permanent, legislative repeal of the Global Gag Rule, a future anti-family planning president could unilaterally reinstate this dangerous policy.

In fact, the lack of a permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule is still impacting some foreign organizations that receive US funding. These organizations are reluctant to coordinate in their work with other family planning providers, who were previously denied funding under the Global Gag Rule, because they are concerned that the Global Gag Rule could be reinstated, forcing them to curtail their participation in a particular program or face a loss of critical funding from the US.

Would a permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule change current US law which prohibits the US funding of abortions overseas? No. While NCJW opposes these restrictions, the Global Democracy Promotion Act has no impact on the ban on the use of US dollars to fund abortions overseas. This ban, known as the Helms amendment, has been in effect since 1973.

If we provide US government funding to an organization that performs abortions, doesn't that mean that the US government is funding abortions? No. Governments and organizations in this country and around the world often segregate funds for different purposes. In this case, money from the US government for family planning services is kept separate from funds that can be used to provide abortion services.

Why is it important to pass the Global Democracy Promotion Act? A permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule is necessary to ensure that women around the globe have access to family planning services and information. Family planning is a fundamental part of health care. Access to these services is vital to the health and well-being of women, children, and families worldwide.