



BACK TO THE FUTURE FOR 2001: Restoring the United States to Full Partnership in International Family Planning Programs

What does Back to the Future mean?

Family planning supporters are committed to restoring funding levels and policies for the U.S. international family planning assistance program to the forward-looking approach of 1995.

In 1995, the United States led the community of donor nations in addressing the urgent and growing global need for family planning services:

- U.S. funding for international family planning programs an area of leadership for the United States since the mid-1960s reached \$542 million in bilateral assistance.
- The U.S. contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was a record \$35 million.

Then the U.S. Congress turned toward the past:

- For FY 1996, it enacted Draconian cuts to family planning assistance, and has held funding to about 30 percent less than 1995 levels ever since.
- In 1999, in exchange for congressional agreement to pay U.S. arrears to the United Nations in FY 2000, the White House was forced to accept a global gag rule that severely restricts private organizations in foreign countries from speaking out on abortion-related issues. Such a gag would be unconstitutional if it applied to U.S. groups.

How much money is at stake for FY 2001?

- President Clinton's proposed budget would restore \$169 million in bilateral assistance (current FY 2000 funding is just \$372.5 million) and bring funding back to roughly the level of FY 1995.
- This level, however, would still be far short of meeting the U.S. fair share, if compared to other donor countries that spend proportionately more (relative to national wealth) on family planning and related health programs.
- Such a restoration of funds would not change the fact that the United States spends less than one percent (1%) of the federal budget on all foreign assistance, including military aid, and less than one-half of one percent (0.5%) on development and humanitarian programs, such as family planning, agriculture, and education.

Why is the global gag rule bad policy?

- *The gag rule exports our politics, but not our rights.* Passed as an amendment to a catch-all funding bill late last year, the gag rule provision bars both foreign non-governmental and multilateral organizations from receiving U.S. family planning funds if with other, non-U.S. funds they provide legal abortion services or engage in any activity or effort to alter the laws or governmental policies of any foreign country concerning the circumstances under which abortion is permitted, regulated, or prohibited. That is, these groups are denied freedom of speech on abortion laws despite it being solely with non-U.S. funds. Such a rule would be deemed unconstitutional in the United States.



- *Existing law already bars U.S. funding for abortions worldwide.* Laws in place for decades already prohibit any U.S. aid recipient from using U.S. funds for either abortion services or advocacy overseas.
- *The gag rule sends a profoundly anti-democratic message.* By restricting the freedom of organizations to engage in public policy debates, the gag rule undermines a central goal of U.S. foreign policy, the promotion of democracy abroad which has at its core the principle of free and open debate. The gag rule also undermines the development of civil society by discriminating against non-governmental organizations. (Governments are exempt from the gag rule.)
- *It is harmful to women's health.* For many poor women abroad, family planning clinics offer the only general health care available. In the event that either the loss of funds or the cap on funding that is part of the gag rule waiver leads to services being cut, women could lose this basic care, as well as access to family planning. In the absence of the waiver, a clinic that provides a range of maternal and child health services, but also provides abortion, would lose its funding under the gag rule.
- *The gag rule also ignores a growing trend towards comprehensive health care for women and children.* It contributes to a rigid separation of abortion services from contraceptive services, limiting access to contraception for women following abortion and impeding efforts to prevent repeat abortions.

Why should the United States support family planning programs in other countries?

- *Americans overwhelmingly support family planning.* A 1998 poll (by RAND/CEDPA) found that 92 percent of Americans support the right to plan one's family.
- *Family planning is a basic right and something people want worldwide.* Some 150 million married women already indicate a desire to plan their families, but lack access to family planning, which includes information, health screening, counseling, and contraceptive services.
- *Demand for family planning is growing.* The largest generation of young people in history is entering or will soon enter their prime reproductive years: three billion of the six billion people alive today are under age 25.
- *Slower population growth can help alleviate environmental stress.* Access to fresh water, the conservation of forests, and the preservation of species-rich habitats can all benefit from slower population growth. For example, the latest water data and population projections indicate that between 2.4 billion and 3.2 billion people may live in either water-scarce or water-stressed conditions by 2025. While many times the 500 million people currently living in such conditions, these figures are still lower than were indicated by projections made in the early 1990s thanks to slower than expected population growth in the past decade.
- *Family planning is an important arena of international cooperation.* Responding to requests from developing countries in the 1960s, the United States and Sweden were the first wealthy countries to provide family planning assistance. Today, the donor community includes 21 countries, the European Union, World Bank, and UNFPA, working in partnership with more than 150 developing countries to help meet the growing demand for family planning and other reproductive health services.

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