

ISSUE BRIEF

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S. 210 & H.R. 671

The Global Health, Empowerment and Rights Act

Introduced January 24, 2017 by Senator Jeanne Shaheen (NH) and Representative Nita Lowey (NY), the **Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act** will permanently end the disastrous Global Gag Rule, which endangers the lives of women and girls globally who depend on US funding for basic life-saving health services.

Global Gag is a disastrous policy that has devastating impacts on global health. Global Gag (also called the “Mexico City Policy”) is a presidential memorandum that withholds US international development assistance from nongovernmental organizations that provide abortion services, information about abortion, or referrals to abortion providers. No U.S. funds ever go to abortion or abortion services, Global Gag means that organizations or clinics that receive US International aid for other reasons-- like maternal health, HIV prevention, or fighting malaria or Zika-- can't so much **as educate their communities** on safe abortion, or they will lose their funding.

President Trump's Global Gag broadens the public health funding affected from the funds directed toward family planning (totaling around \$600 million) to all segments of public health funding (totaling \$9 billion). This broad extension of Global Gag will mean fewer women and girls have access to birth control, fewer people in the Global South will be able to access to life-saving basic health services, and, like in previous iterations of the Global Gag, abortion rates will **increase**, not decrease.

The Helms Amendment already prohibits the use of US funds by NGOs for abortion services, but Global Gag prevents NGOs from using their own money to perform or advocate for such purposes. No money is being saved from this policy. The funding will just be directed to less-effective organizations, like those who do not provide competent family planning services (such as contraception) or evidence-based medical services or programming.

Global Gag threatens the United States' net positive effect on global health efforts. The United States is a critical player in foreign public health assistance funding. Not only do organizations benefitting from US funding help the local populations they serve through direct care, but they also empower local populations to organize at the grassroots level to combat medical crises. Global Gag dampens the efforts of NGOs that are committed to providing comprehensive care on all fronts.

Global HER protects local NGOs from losing US assistance based off of other services they provide. No president after the passage of this act can reinstate the Global Gag Rule.

The Global HER will:

- Permanently nullify the Global Gag Rule
- Make US international development assistance to nongovernmental organizations not contingent on the types of other medical services that they provide as long as those services fall within the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the laws within that country.
- Lift requirements for the use of non-US funds by nongovernmental organizations

Amnesty International Recommends that Senators and Representatives:

- Co-sponsor the Global HER Act