



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Representative:

The State/Foreign Operations appropriations bill, which the full House may soon debate, raises two serious problems. A fundamental problem is language in Section 622 rescinding the Mexico City Policy, which prevents U.S. family planning assistance from being channeled through groups that perform and promote abortion as family planning. I am writing to urge your support for an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) to delete this misguided provision. The other serious problem is a harmful provision nullifying the current allocation of one-third of AIDS prevention funds for abstinence programs that have proven to be very effective in Africa. On that issue I urge you to follow the wise counsel in a letter from our Bishops' Conference and Catholic Relief Services.

The Mexico City Policy was promulgated by President Reagan in 1984, and has continued in law since then except for an eight-year gap during the Clinton administration. It was first announced at the 1984 United Nations International Conference on Population in Mexico City, where member nations approved the following policy in their final report: "Governments are urged... to take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning, and whenever possible, provide for the humane treatment and counseling of women who have had recourse to abortion." The U.S. said it would no longer fund nongovernmental organizations violating this international consensus.

The U.N. conference's policy was supported not only by the United States, the Holy See, and many developed nations such as France, Italy and Germany, but also by the great majority of developing nations, many of whom resent Western efforts to promote abortion to them as a badge of "progress." This policy of excluding abortion from family planning programs was reaffirmed by member nations a decade later, at the U.N. population conference in Cairo – despite the U.S. delegation's support at that time for an international "right" to abortion – and at the U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, as well as by the U.N. General Assembly's resolution of 2000 setting future directions for implementing the Beijing report.

These documents acknowledged that a central goal of family planning programs should be to *reduce* abortions. Hence it would be counter-productive to place such programs in the hands of those who perform and promote abortion (especially those so deeply committed to abortion that they would rather refuse U.S. funds than give up promoting it). National delegations opposing the U.N. policy of 1984, such as Sweden and the People's Republic of China, did so because they favor abortion (and in China's case, forced abortion).

This policy was never an imposition by the United States on reluctant developing nations, for it was enthusiastically supported by those nations. Nor was it about opposition to family planning itself. On the contrary, the legislation creating the United States' own domestic family planning program in 1970, Title X of the Public Health Services Act, has always prohibited funding "programs where abortion is a method of family planning" (42 USC §300a-6). Supporters saw this

policy as essential to any such program – in fact, evidence from Great Britain, Japan and other countries had shown that “the prevalence of abortion as a substitute or a back-up for contraceptive methods can reduce the effectiveness of family planning programs” (see *Cong. Record*, Nov. 16, 1970, H10286-9).

Those who now oppose the Mexico City policy seem to be ignoring these realities. Their free-standing bill is even titled the “Ensuring Access to Contraceptives Act” (H.R. 2367), although its only purpose is to do something that the U.S. and the U.N. have long known has the *opposite* effect – that is, divert family planning funds to groups that perform and promote abortion.

Because such legislation claims to be dedicated to “reducing rates of abortion” (H.R. 2367, Sec. 2 (a)(6)), it may be useful to restate certain facts:

First, abortion does not plan a family. It kills a member of the family. Even Planned Parenthood used to acknowledge this in its materials recommending “birth control”: “Is it an abortion? Definitely not. An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun” (*Plan Your Children for Health and Happiness*, Planned Parenthood-World Population, 1963).

Second, promoting contraceptives does not necessarily reduce abortions (see the studies cited at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/contraception/contrafactsheet0207.shtml). Even the new “back-up” solution of increased access to “emergency contraception” has been found in dozens of studies not to reduce abortions (www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/factsheetec21607.shtml). This is true even without taking into account the very troubling possibility that some drugs marketed as contraceptives may act at times by interfering with newly conceived life instead.

Third, whatever one’s view of the studies mentioned above, it has long been known that including *abortion* in a family planning program undermines any effectiveness it might have had. When abortion is made available alongside preventive methods, abortion *replaces* prevention.

Fourth, and beyond any particular empirical study, logic and common sense dictate that we cannot *reduce* abortions by supporting groups dedicated to *promoting* abortions. Such a policy is simply at war with itself.

Respect for innocent human life, a due regard for the culture and the rights of vulnerable developing nations, and even the practical concerns of those committed to effective family planning programs all argue for the same conclusion. Therefore I urge you to support the Stupak/Smith amendment, so the Mexico City Policy can remain in effect.

Sincerely,



Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops