



# The Global HER Act

## What is the Global HER Act?

The Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights Act (Global HER Act) (S. 210/H.R. 671), introduced in the Senate by Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and in the House by Nita Lowey (D-NY), would create a permanent, legislative repeal of the Global Gag Rule. The bill currently has 46 co-sponsors in the Senate and 156 in the House of Representatives.

## Why Do We Need the Global Her Act?

Within days of assuming the presidency, Donald Trump imposed a radically expanded version of the Global Gag Rule. Instead of applying the policy only to family planning funding, as has happened under previous administrations, the Trump administration applied it to all global health funding. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and childhood nutrition programs are all at risk. The Gag Rule has always taken the form of an Executive Order. It can be unilaterally imposed or rescinded by whoever happens to be in the Oval Office. The Global HER Act would repeal the policy and prevent a future president from unilaterally reinstating it.

## What Is the Impact of the Gag Rule?

Past versions of the Gag Rule have been devastating to family planning programs around the world. The expansion of the policy to other global health programs will be catastrophic—potentially affecting \$9.5 billion or more in U.S. aid.

From 2017–2020 alone, Marie Stopes International estimates that under the Gag Rule the loss of their services around the world could result in 6.5 million unintended pregnancies, 2.2 million abortions (2.1 million of them unsafe), and 21,700 maternal deaths.

A 2011 Stanford University study found that abortion rates more than doubled in the African countries most reliant on U.S. family planning aid during the years the Gag Rule was most recently in place (2001-2009).

The Family Planning Association of Kenya was forced to close three of its clinics (which served a total of 56,000 clients), cut outreach staff by half, and raise fees at the remaining clinics, effectively withdrawing from communities that had come to depend on the clinics for essential health services.

Nepal changed its abortion law in 2002 at a time when it had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world—driven largely by unsafe abortion. As a result of a previous version the Global Gag Rule, the Family Planning Association of Nepal, unwilling to deny women counseling about safe abortion, immediately lost American funding for family planning services and contraceptive supplies. As a result, 60 health workers were laid off, mobile reproductive health clinics were eliminated, and the association's ability to provide steady access to contraceptives withered. After the Global Gag Rule was lifted by President Obama and funding was restored, Nepal's maternal mortality rate fell by a third. Trump's action threatens to undo that progress.

Experts fear that the application of the Gag Rule to HIV/AIDS funding could cripple global prevention and treatment programs like PEPFAR.

The Global Gag Rule is a heinous policy that inflicts tremendous suffering on some of the world's most vulnerable women. The current administration's vast expansion will only magnify that harm. Millions of women, children, and families are going to be hurt by this cruel and counterproductive policy. Passing the language of the Global HER Act will make American policy more effective, more rational, and more just.