



washington view

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Federal Budget Update

With the start of the next fiscal year (October 1) looming, the buzz in the nation's Capitol is over the 2004 federal budget. With no spending bills signed into law, there is a small possibility that some of the more contentious measures may be rolled into a larger omnibus spending bill. Here is a roundup of key population-related programs:

In late summer, the House passed its fiscal 2004 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill (H.R. 2660), which contains level funding of \$275 million for the Title X domestic family planning program. The Senate version (S.#1356), approved out of committee, includes a welcome \$10 million boost for Title X. As the only federal grant program exclusively dedicated to family planning, Title X clinics provide millions of American women and teens with reproductive health services, including but not limited to contraceptive care, pap smears, STD screening and breast exams. Title X programs are facing pressure to address a growing demand for subsidized family planning services without a substantial increase in funding.

Meanwhile, debate over international family planning aid has been contentious in both the House and Senate. The Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the 2004 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill (S.#1426). As predicted, it contains level funding for international family planning efforts through USAID—\$446 million. The House bill (H.R. 2800), approved on the

floor, provides only \$425 million for the international family planning assistance program. Both bills provide U.S. funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The House bill allocates \$25 million and the Senate \$35 million. Unfortunately, because of opponents of UNFPA in Congress and the president's opposition, it is possible that no allocated money will end up going to UNFPA in the 2004 fiscal year. This would be the third year in a row with a ban on UNFPA aid.

Major Victory! Senate Votes to Repeal Global Gag Rule

After several hours of debate, the U.S. Senate approved an amendment from Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) to repeal the harmful "Global Gag Rule." The gag rule denies foreign organizations receiving U.S. family planning assistance the right to use their own, non-U.S. funds to either engage in public policy debates or perform legal abortions. The policy also disqualifies foreign NGOs from receiving U.S. family planning funds if they provide legal abortion services or provide counseling and referral for abortion, or if they lobby to make abortion legal in their own country.

The unanimous consent motion to adopt the Boxer provision came after a failed attempt from Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) to table (kill) the Boxer amendment. The Lugar motion was successfully defeated by a vote of 53 to 43. Had all Senators been present and voting, at least 56 would have voted for the Boxer provision—the highest vote tally on this issue in recent memory. Visit

<http://capwiz.com/zpg/issues/> to see how your member voted.

The Boxer amendment, now part of the 2004 Foreign Relations Authorization bill (S.#925), proceeds next to a House-Senate Conference Committee. Family planning opponents are expected to pressure conferees to strip the Boxer language from the bill. The House version of this bill is silent on the issue. President Bush has stated that if the Boxer provision is part of a compromised authorization bill, he will veto the entire bill.

Contraceptive Equity Bill Reintroduced

Good News! The Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Act of 2003 (EPICC) was reintroduced in Congress with bipartisan support. The measure (H.R. 2727/S.#1396) requires private insurance plans that cover prescription drugs to also provide coverage for prescription contraceptives. Contraception is a basic health care need, yet due to insurers' poor coverage for contraception, women end up paying 68 percent more for out-of-pocket medical costs than men. Sens. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Harry Reid (D-NV) are the chief sponsors of the bill in the Senate and Reps. Jim Greenwood (R-PA) and Nita Lowey (D-NY) are the House sponsors. (See inside front cover for info. on states that have contraceptive equity laws.)

Take Action Now: Please urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor EPICC. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121.

