



From the President

When George Bush slashed all \$34 million allocated for United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) family planning programs this summer, a firestorm of editorial criticism erupted: “inexcusable...an international embarrassment...pandering...puritanical, narrow minded.”

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette called it “a cheap political act that should be reversed on an urgent basis.” Newsday said, “Like Dr. Strangelove, the Bush administration seems unable to pass by a right-wing agenda without saluting.”

After Bush imposed the odious Global Gag Rule last year, we came within four votes of rescinding the Gag Rule. We won in the Senate and lost by a scant four votes in the 435 member House of Representatives.

Now our task is clear. We must keep population and family planning on a national agenda crowded with talk of war and economic uncertainty. Most of all, we must remind Congress that it approved \$34 million for UNFPA. Bush signed that funding into law, then—incredibly—canceled it.

Bush has done enormous damage to family planning. Congress can overrule him and restore full funding.

Here’s what UNFPA could have done with the \$34 million in family planning funds slashed by Bush:

\$34 million could prevent two million unwanted pregnancies. It could save 4,700 women from death related to child-bearing. It could also prevent 77,000 infant and child deaths in the poorest places on earth.

The Radical Right is up in arms over UNFPA’s presence in China. These extremists don’t seem to know—or care—that this UN agency promotes purely voluntary family planning. Nor is this political faction interested that not one dime of U.S. funds was going to programs in China anyway.

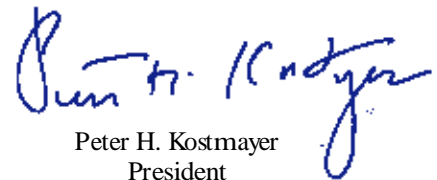
George Bush’s own handpicked investigative team recently returned from China. They reported that UNFPA programs are doing exactly what they’re supposed to do: providing family planning and helping women.

According to the Bush administration, the very fact that UNFPA operates in China makes it complicit in human rights abuses committed by the Chinese government. The decision was made in direct opposition to the recommendation made by the President’s own fact-finding team after it visited China to examine UNFPA’s program.

Anti-family planning groups have been pressuring the administration for months to openly demonstrate President Bush’s anti-family planning bias by permanently denying money to UNFPA. Bush’s recent decision was based solely on domestic political calculations and not on the merits of UNFPA’s excellent work.

Supporters of UNFPA on Capitol Hill have vowed to restore aid for the agency in next year’s budget. The Senate Appropriations Committee has voted to allocate \$50 million for UNFPA in the 2003 Foreign Aid spending bill. And U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, along with other members of Congress, introduced the “Still Saving Women’s Lives Act of 2002.” The bill, H.R. 5293, gives money to UNFPA for 2003 and makes it harder for the President to deprive women around the world of reproductive healthcare services.

You and I know something that President Bush does not seem to understand—that there is a clear connection between population growth and virtually every challenge facing our planet. We must persuade Congress to undo the terrible damage already done by the Bush administration to family planning around this crowded, dangerous world of ours.


 Peter H. Kostmayer
 President

