



July 9, 2015

International Family Planning Champions Recapture Ground in the Senate

This morning, during full committee markup of the FY 2016 State Department and foreign operations appropriations bill, Senate family planning champions won the second skirmish in what is likely to be a long campaign to defend funding for international family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) programs from the imposition of debilitating funding cuts and restrictive policy riders.

Last month, the House Appropriations Committee approved its version of an FY 2016 funding bill (H.R. 2772) that cut and capped bilateral and multilateral FP/RH funding at \$461 million—a \$149 million reduction below current funding levels—prohibited a U.S. contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and reinstated the Global Gag Rule.

The draft subcommittee version of the Senate bill unveiled on Tuesday was identical to the House committee-approved bill in its harsh treatment of FP/RH programs. But while the [three amendments](#) to correct the severe deficiencies in FP/RH funding and policy that were offered during full committee markup in the House failed on largely party-line votes, a single, successful bipartisan amendment during Senate markup this morning fixed all the problematic provisions in one fell swoop.

Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and subcommittee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-VT) offered an amendment on international FP/RH funding and policy, which includes:

- Restoring the funding for the FP/RH programs of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNFPA to the President's FY 2016 budget request level of \$612.6 million, including a \$35 million earmarked U.S. contribution for UNFPA (see funding chart below);
- Striking the prohibition on a UNFPA contribution and reinstating current law restrictions with the exception of the dollar-for-dollar reduction in the contribution by the amount UNFPA spends in China; and
- Replacing the reimposition of the [Global Gag Rule](#) with the permanent legislative repeal of the executive branch policy based on the Global Democracy Promotion Act ([S. 677](#)).

The funding levels and policy provisions contained in the Shaheen-Leahy amendment are identical to those that have been in Senate committee-approved bills for the last five fiscal years.

The all-inclusive, pro-family planning amendment was adopted on a bipartisan vote of 17 to 13 with all committee Democrats joining with three Republicans, Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) in approving the amendment.

Other cosponsors of the Shaheen-Leahy amendment included all but one of the Democratic members of the committee, including full committee Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Sens. Richard Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tom Udall (D-NM), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Patty Murray (D-WA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Chris Murphy (D-CT), and Jon Tester (D-MT)—and Republican Senator Mark Kirk. Senator Shaheen [spoke](#) eloquently in support of her amendment during markup.

Subcommittee Chairman Lindsay Graham (R-SC) offered token, pro-forma opposition, citing the likely complications in negotiating a final deal with the House that will be caused by the wide gulf on family planning issues between the House and Senate versions of the legislation.

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING/REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FUNDING

(in millions of dollars)	FY 2015 Enacted	FY 2016 President's Budget Request	FY 2016 House Committee Bill	Shaheen-Leahy Amendment
Global Health Programs account	(523.95)	538.0	(461.0)	(538.0)
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	—	39.6	—	(39.6)
TOTAL, bilateral FP/RH	575.0	577.6	(461.0)	577.6
U.S. contribution to UNFPA (IO&P)	35.0	35.0	0	35.0
TOTAL, bilateral & multilateral FP/RH	610.0	612.6	461.0*	(612.6)

NOTE: FP/RH funding levels that were earmarked in the statute are indicated in **bold**, while funding levels that were specified in report language are denoted in (parentheses).

* Earmark is a statutory ceiling—"not more than" \$461 million for FP/RH programs from all funding accounts.

Passage of the Shaheen-Leahy amendment sets up the same array of forces that have aligned for the past five fiscal years with a Senate bill that funds FP/RH programs at a responsible level, contributes to UNFPA, and blocks reimposition of the GGR and a House bill that guts bilateral and multilateral funding and attaches hostile policy riders.

If—or when—a negotiation on the State-foreign operations bill will take place between House and Senate appropriators is difficult to predict. It is increasingly unlikely that either bill will be considered on the floor of either chamber. This is a positive development for international FP/RH programs as opponents now outnumber supporters in the Senate for the first time ever as a result of the 2014 mid-term congressional election. In the House, the unfavorable headcount of family planning opponents versus supporters is among the worst in memory.

Democratic Senators remain united in blocking floor consideration of any of the 12 appropriations bills that fund the federal government until there is a deal struck between Congress and the President to replace the severe caps on defense and non-defense discretionary spending under sequestration. As the August recess and the start of the fiscal year on October 1 approach, the likelihood of the need to pass a "continuing resolution" (CR) to keep the government running under current funding and policy grows. A long-term CR would not be a bad outcome in today's political and budgetary environment.

For international family planning advocates and our congressional supporters, holding the line and surviving to fight another day is a victory in the political battles over reproductive health and rights being waged in Washington right now, a Washington where House Republican appropriators unabashedly zero out all funding for the Title X domestic family planning program benefiting low-income women around the country.