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for  
HEALTH  
and  
GENDER  
EQUITY

*Advancing  
gender equity  
and social justice  
in international  
population and  
health policy*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Media Contact:**  
**Serra Sippel, +1 (301) 270-1182;**  
**mobile, +1 (301) 768-7162**  
**Ssippel@genderhealth.org**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **U.S. Senate Votes to Repeal Global Gag Rule and Senate also votes to Ease Restrictions on U.S. Global HIV Prevention, Family Planning Funding**

*Center for Health and Gender Equity applauds victory for women worldwide and calls for continued efforts to ensure effective, rights-based HIV prevention and family planning policies.*

(Washington, D.C.)—Last night, the U.S. Senate voted to repeal the Mexico City Policy, also known as the Global Gag Rule. The Center for Health and Gender Equity praised the Senate's action as critical to ensuring the health and well-being of women around the world.

“Women have had to bear the brunt of the Bush Administration's ideologically-driven policies that undermine their right to make informed and healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive health,” said Serra Sippel, Acting Executive Director at the Center for Health and Gender Equity. “By repealing the Global Gag Rule, the Senate has provided women with some relief; we must now redouble our efforts to ensure that the President does not veto this bill.”

Senators Boxer (D-CA) and Snowe (R-ME) offered the amendment to repeal the Mexico City Policy during Senate debate over the State and Foreign Operations Bill, H.R. 2764. An estimated 200 million women have an unmet need for family planning, and 70,000 die of complications from unsafe abortion each year. The Mexico City Policy, an executive order issued as President Bush's first act of office, bars U.S. family planning aid, including contraceptives, to any foreign organization that *uses its own funds* or funds from other donors to provide information, make referrals, or counsel women on abortion; advocate for the liberalization of abortion policies; or perform legal abortions services.

“The Global Gag Rule undermines democracy and puts women's lives at risk,” said Sippel, “This vote represents a stride toward ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance promotes America's values and sound public health interventions.”

The Senate-passed State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill included two additional victories for women and girls. The first provision authorizes the president to waive the requirement that one third of all U.S. HIV prevention funding under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) be used for abstinence-until-marriage programs. The second provision included \$461.1 million for international family planning and reproductive health programs in fiscal year 2008.

“These are much-needed steps taken by the Democratic majority to move the Bush Administration away from ideology and toward making sound policies that are based on evidence and reality,” stated Sippel.

*The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) is a US-based non-governmental organization that seeks to ensure that U.S. international policies and programs promote sexual and reproductive health and rights through effective,*

*evidence-based approaches to prevention and treatment of critical reproductive and sexual health concerns, and through increased funding for critical international programs and institutions.*

Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)  
6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 910, Takoma Park, MD 20912, USA  
Tel: 1.301.270.1182 · Fax: 1.301.270.2052 · [change@genderhealth.org](mailto:change@genderhealth.org)  
[www.genderhealth.org](http://www.genderhealth.org) · [www.pepfarwatch.org](http://www.pepfarwatch.org) · [www.preventionnow.net](http://www.preventionnow.net)

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