



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 6, 2011

## House Republicans Advance Vote to Defund UN Group

Introduced by Representative Renee Ellmers (R-N.C.), the legislation to defund the UNFPA passed in the House Foreign Relations Committee on a party-line vote of 23-17. The bill would save \$400 million over the next 10 years in funding to the agency.

In 2002, President George W. Bush defunded UNFPA, pointing to the 1985 “Kemp-Kasten amendment” which prohibits federal funding for any agency that “supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.” Then Secretary of State Colin Powell declared, “Regardless of the modest size of UNFPA’s budget in China or any benefits its programs provide, UNFPA’s support of, and involvement in, China’s population-planning activities allows the Chinese government to implement more effectively its program of coercive abortion.”



When President Obama took office in 2008, however, he restored funding to the UNFPA.

“Whether or not you believe the U.S. should be borrowing money from China to fund U.N. projects in China, U.S. taxpayers should not be forced to fund programs that violate provisions of the Kemp-Kasten amendment,” Ellmers said during the markup hearing for H.R. 2059. “If the Chinese wish to do such things, they should not expect funding from the United States taxpayer.”

Those opposed to the bill attempted to defend the need to continue funding such an agency by pointing to UNFPA programs around the world which would be negatively impacted by a U.S. funding freeze. However, supporters of the bill contend that the forced abortions and other violations allowed to take place under the one-child program are far more significant.

House Chairwoman, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), quickly quelled assertions that UNFPA requires U.S. money to fund its programs. “UNFPA clearly does not need U.S. funding. Reports indicate that UNFPA has built up reserves and unspent funds of 500 million dollars. UNFPA’s annual report for 2010 indicated that its budget totaled 870 million dollars — a record amount,” said Ros-Lehtinen.

According to Ros-Lehtinen, the American people cannot afford to fund these agencies any longer, particularly ones which support forced abortions. “So why, when Americans face a struggling economy, skyrocketing deficits, and crushing debt, should our taxpayer dollars go to an organization that supports coercive abortion and is flush with cash? Again,” she points out, “there are much better uses for taxpayer funds than sending millions to UNFPA.”

Sensing that they were losing the debate, Democrats on the committee resorted to many of the same



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talking points used to support the funding of groups such as Planned Parenthood. Democratic Rep. Howard Berman of California said that without proper funding, poor women and children in developing countries would suffer from disease, war, and rape. “Rather than helping these desperate people — as UNFPA seeks to do — the legislation makes them pawns in a debate over social issues that often seems divorced from reality,” he said, adding, “Rather than lobbing another grenade in our culture wars, this committee should be working to strengthen maternal mortality prevention efforts, improve the capacity of health systems in the developing world, and protect women from rape as an instrument of war.”

Likewise, Rep. Gerald Connolly (D-Va.) called the anti-UNFPA measure a “smear campaign [against] an easy target.”

Republican supporters of the bill did in fact note that UNFPA does accomplish important things globally, but that those things are undermined by the population-control programs it supports.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) said, “Yes, UNFPA may do some other things — but so do other multilateral organizations, so does USAID. Our dollars ought to go where we are not in any way complicit in these crimes against women — and that is not a smear, I say to my friend [Connolly] — these are crimes against women and children. Let’s not forget, at the Nuremburg war crimes tribunal forced abortion was called — rightfully so — a crime against women and a crime against humanity. It is no less a crime today.”

As noted by CNS News, “Smith is the author of the China Democracy Promotion Act of 2011, a bill that provides the president with the authority to deny access to the U.S. of anyone linked to human rights violations in China, with one of the specified targets anyone who ‘has participated in the imposition of the People’s Republic of China’s coercive birth limitation policy.’”

In addition to program funding, defenders of the agency contend it cannot be held accountable for what takes place in Chinese countries where such practices are enforced in order to maintain population control. They point to a 2002 State Department investigation in China, which concluded, “We find no evidence that UNFPA has knowingly supported or participated in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.”

Critics point to that same analysis by the State Department, which also found that UNFPA-funded computers and data processing equipment helped China’s ability to impose fines or perform forced abortions.

Likewise, the bill’s supporters point to a statement made by Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, the executive director of the United Nations Population Fund, which not only indicates a tolerance for China’s coercive practices, but [praise](#) for it. Obaid praised the population-control program, applauding a decrease in China’s population over the course of the last 20 years. She virtually declared that the morality of population-control programs is relative, as different countries maintain different viewpoints with regard to birth control. She encouraged nations to find a solution best suitable for their own domestic situations.

Ros-Lehtinen said at the hearing, “The State Department has repeatedly found that UNFPA refuses to provide detailed information on its activities in China.” She continued, “In December of 2010, the vice-minister of China’s National Population and Family Planning Commission thanked UNFPA for ‘it’s constant support to China’s population and family planning undertakings during the past thirty years and more. UNFPA continues business as usual, and last year, it approved another five-year operational plan for China.’”



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The House vote comes just one day before Americans for UNFPA holds its 2011 “gala for the health and dignity of women” in New York City, which includes “450 business leaders, dignitaries, activists and celebrities.”

The group has adamantly opposed the proposal to cut funding for UNFPA. Valerie DeFillipo, president of Americans for UNFPA, said that the initiative is “a result of misguided ideology and politics.”

“When U.S. funding is withheld, UNFPA’s lifesaving work will unquestionably dwindle, making women the pawns in this dangerous game. We simply cannot allow this to happen in the spirit of ideological demagoguery and ultimatums,” she declared.

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