

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8033

As of February 02, 2006

Brief Description: Calling on the President to renew funding for the United Nations Population Fund.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Keiser, Franklin, Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/1/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), founded in 1969, describes itself as:

. . . an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA's work is guided by the Programme of Action adopted at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. The main goals of the Programme of Action are: (1) universal access to reproductive health services by 2015; (2) universal primary education and closing the gender gap in education by 2015; (3) reducing maternity mortality by seventy-five percent by 2015; (4) reducing infant mortality; (5) increasing life expectancy; and (6) reducing HIV infection rates.

UNFPA is financed through donations from United Nation Member States. In 2005, 171 nations contributed approximately \$350 million. Since 2002, President Bush has withheld congressionally approved contributions from the United States to UNFPA on the grounds that the UNFPA supports Chinese government programs which include forced abortions and sterilizations.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Numerous findings are made regarding the treatment and well-being of girls and women around the world, and the role of the UNFPA in addressing these concerns. The Washington State Legislature requests that the United States government renew funding for UNFPA to promote the health and rights of women around the world.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute adds a clause stating the opposition of the Legislature to any and all coerced sterilization, coerced family planning, or coerced abortion, and a clause stating that it is the policy of the United States that its funds may not be used for coerced sterilization, coerced family planning, or coerced abortion.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Testimony For: Funding from the United States is vital to the continuation of the life-saving reproductive health work of the United Nations Population Fund, which focuses on family planning, safe motherhood, gender equality, youth development, and STD and HIV prevention. For example, in Bolivia, the UNFPA has been one of the leaders in HIV prevention efforts. But because the UNFPA budget is insufficient in Bolivia, the programs can only reach a select group of people. By passing the joint memorial, the Legislature will be making a statement that it cares about the lives of the people that the Fund serves. This memorial is a positive way to affirm the sacred worth of all persons and the safety of all women worldwide.

Testimony Against: We support the goals of UNFPA to reduce poverty, to ensure live births, and to treat girls and women with respect and dignity, but oppose allocating funds when they are used to violate these very goals. Chinese human rights advocates have provided compelling evidence that UNFPA has supported and has been involved in the administration of an oppressive Chinese program of coercion. The program includes forced abortion and sterilization, and the imposition of fines, destruction of homes, and imprisonment of women and their family members for failure to comply.

Who Testified: PRO: Mina Halpern, University of Washington School of Public Health International Health Program; Carolyn Petersen, First United Methodist Church.

CON: Matt Muckler, Washington State Catholic Conference.