

Trump's new federal law blocks state funding for Planned Parenthood

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On Thursday, President Donald Trump signed a bill that would allow states to deny family planning clinics access to federal funds, based on whether or not the clinic also provides abortion services.

The bill already passed Congress last month with a tie-breaking vote by Republican Vice President Mike Pence. Trump has stated that federal funds could continue to be allotted to Planned Parenthood if clinics agree to discontinue providing abortion services, which they have refused to do.

Trump signed the bill under the guise of the Congressional Review Act (CRA), instated by Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1996. It allows lawmakers to nullify rules within 60 days of enactment as long as they have approval from the president.

Former President Barack Obama's law, signed just two days before the inauguration of Trump, did not allow any state to withhold federal funds to a clinic for any other reason than its ability to provide family planning services.

Trump has made clear his reactionary stance on abortion. Days after his inauguration he signed an executive order which reinstates the "Mexico City policy," better known as the "global gag rule." It denies US federal money to any nongovernmental organization in the world that provides counseling for abortion, even if the money is not used for actual abortion-related services.

The bill gives each state the right to refuse Title X grant money to any clinic that provides abortion services. Title X provides the majority of funding to Planned Parenthood. It was signed into law in 1970 by then-president Richard Nixon, just after Johnson's "war on poverty." In 1972 another bill was passed which allowed each state to draw on its federally allotted Medicaid money to provide related services to

low-income families.

The services provided through the grant money include pregnancy tests and counseling; pelvic and breast exams; cervical cancer screening; breast cancer screening; screening and treatment for a variety of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV; HIV and STI prevention education; contraception; sexual education and counseling; and family planning.

According to a September 2016 report released by the Guttmacher Institute, 71 percent of all women served by publicly funded centers—or 3.7 million—were served by centers that received some funding from Title X in 2014.

The same report states: "Of the 38 million women in need of contraceptive care in 2014, 20 million were in need of publicly funded services and supplies because they either had an income below 250 percent of the federal poverty level or were younger than 20. ... Among the 20 million women in need of publicly funded contraceptive care, 77 percent (15.5 million) were poor or low-income adults, and 23 percent (4.7 million) were younger than 20."

According to their web site, funds from Title X have allowed Planned Parenthood to provide 6 million STI screenings, 1 million breast exams and 800,000 Pap smears in 2015 alone. The law allows states to block this federal grant money to any clinic that provides abortion services, even though it is illegal for any federal funds to provide abortion services to women unless the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or is proven to be life-threatening for the mother. Over half of Planned Parenthood-affiliated clinics do not provide abortion services to begin with.

According to Planned Parenthood Executive Vice President Dawn Laguens, this legislation would deny up to 4 million people access to family planning

services. Around 80 percent of Title X patients have incomes that fall below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. This will affect low-income women of color and immigrant women, especially those who have no other household insurance or income provider, particularly single women with children.

Around one-third of people who use services provided by Title X funding were through Planned Parenthood, or around 1.5 million people. Although Planned Parenthood makes up only 10 percent of safety-net health centers, in 2010 over one-third of women who obtained contraceptives through safety-net centers received them at Planned Parenthood.

The result of such reactionary measures will be disastrous for low-income, working class and poor women and their families around the country who already do not have access to affordable health care.



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