

Hyde Amendment: A Bi-Partisan Disaster

In June 1976, the House of Representatives passed an amendment to the Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) budget banning the use of Medicaid funds for abortions, named for its sponsor, Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL). The Senate refused to agree and the issue reached an impasse. Up until then, President Gerald Ford had indicated that he would veto such a provision. Once the presidential campaign swung into full gear, Jimmy Carter, as the Democratic nominee, emphasized his personal opposition to abortion and federal funding for abortions. Only after Carter made his position known did Ford reverse his and the Senate caved in, reconciling the two versions of the HEW budget including the Hyde Amendment. The bill was passed into law on September 30, 1976 and became official in August 1977.

Thus, although the Hyde Amendment was first passed into law under a Republican president, Gerald Ford, it was a Democratic presidential candidate, Jimmy Carter, who was instrumental in pushing Ford to reverse his position and to support the measure. The Hyde Amendment is thus a truly bipartisan disaster.

Since 1976, the Hyde Amendment has been inserted each year into the budget of HEW, now Health and Human Services (HHS), often without debate. Prior to 1976, the federal government funded about 300,000 abortions a year for Medicaid recipients. In 1995, when the law was slightly less restrictive than now, that number has dwindled to less than three hundred.

While versions of the Hyde Amendment have changes year to year, the current version allows for federal funding of abortion only when the women's life is in danger.

Seventeen states have stepped in and allocated funds to maintain abortion coverage for Medicaid recipients. Those states include; New Jersey, Oregon Washington, Illinois, California and Massachusetts. New York covers some recipients and thirty-three states do not fund abortions at all. In those states the Hyde Amendment has stripped low-income women of a basic right.

In the 1980s Congress widened the prohibition on federal funding of abortions. These targeted include: federal employees and their dependents, Native Americans, military personnel and their dependents, federal prisoners, and low-income residents of the District of Columbia.

The Hyde Amendment is Deadly

The Hyde Amendment does matter. Studies have shown that about one-third of those women receiving Medicaid, who carry their pregnancies to term, would have had abortions had the procedure been available to them through Medicaid. The other two-thirds do have abortions. These are usually legal abortions, and the cost creates real financial problems for the women involved, and for their families. A significant, but undetermined, number of women affected by the Hyde Amendment are forced to have illegal "back-alley" abortions at considerable risk to their health.

Knee-jerk Support of Democrats?

John Kerry voted against the Hyde Amendment in 1994. Nevertheless, he does not discuss the issue (even on his website). Continuing to acquiesce to the Hyde Amendment perpetrates a dual, highly unjust situation whereby most women with privately funded healthcare have access to safe abortion, while most women with publicly funded health care do not.

In order to help build the momentum necessary to repeal the Hyde Amendment, the Socialist Party is calling for the formation of a radical coalition within the reproductive rights movement. The huge turnout for last spring's *March for Women's Lives* in Washington DC proves how much energy and commitment there is for the defense of abortion rights. However, the mainstream leadership directs most of its organizational and financial resources to support for the Democratic Party agenda and candidates. Those of us on the left need to be sure another voice is heard; one that places abortion rights in the context of human rights, social and economic justice, and independent political action.

A Grassroots Movement is Needed

Only our grassroots efforts will put the repeal of the discriminatory and unjust Hyde Amendment on the national agenda. No action is too small. All are important. Now is the time to get started.

Join the Socialist Party USA

I the undersigned, desiring to bring about by democratic means a new society based upon democratic socialism, hereby apply for membership in the Socialist Party USA and subscribe to its principles.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel# : _____

E-Mail: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ D.O.B.: _____

Other political organizations to which I belong:

Are you a Union member?: _____

Union: _____

Special concerns (anti-racism, feminism, etc.):

Dues Rates: (based on annual income):

Full-Time Students \$15 * Under \$20,000 \$25

\$20k - \$35,000 \$60 * \$35k - \$50,000 \$125

Over \$50,000 \$250

Dues waived in cases of poverty

Membership Included:

- Full voting rights & membership card
- Subscription to *The Socialist*
- Subscription to *Arise!* and *The Organizer*

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HONOR THE MEMORY OF ROSIE JIMENEZ

On October 3, 1977, Rosie Jimenez, a young woman from McAllen Texas, died from complications arising from a back-alley abortion. She died only weeks after the Hyde Amendment statute took effect, and days after the first anniversary of its initial passage. Ms. Jimenez was the first known victim of the Hyde Amendment.

On the weekend of October 3, 2004 we will organize local actions in memory of Ms. Jimenez and all the victims of the Hyde Amendment.

For an action in your area or to get more involved in the work of the Socialist Party, contact:

SP USA Women's Commission

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Local contact:

REPEAL THE HYDE AMENDMENT

Reproductive rights for all.



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