

Insight: The Hyde Amendment

BACKGROUND:

Since the 1980s, the United States Congress has passed each year a legislative provision that, in theory, prohibits the use of taxpayer dollars for abortion. This amendment is known as the “Hyde Amendment” and is named after Illinois Representative and anti-abortion advocate, Henry Hyde. This clause initially took effect in 1980, [when the Supreme Court ruled that such a provision was constitutional](#).

Since then, the exceptions to this amendment have varied some, where at times the only exception was for the “life of the mother” and now where it includes “rape” or “incest.” Regardless of the specifics, the objective of not forcing taxpayers to cover the bill for abortions has been an overwhelmingly bipartisan effort for decades. Even pro-abortion liberals, such as then-Senator and Vice President Biden, supported this [compromise](#) as recently as 2019.

HYDE AMENDMENT TODAY:

Recently, however, passing a federal budget that does not contain the Hyde Amendment has been an initiative for liberals and progressives in Congress. Now President Biden, who for years cited his Catholic faith as a reason to support the Hyde Amendment, has reversed his stance on not sticking the American people with abortion costs, and proposed a budget without any sort of provision that disallows the usage of funds for these services.

For the first time in decades, the House of Representatives [passed spending bills](#) that do not have any sort of provision banning abortion funding. However, these bills don’t just affect the American people. This new spending package also notably did not include the similar Helms Amendment, which prevents federal funding of international abortion services. Though passage through an evenly-split Senate is uncertain, the mere fact that the House would impose the cost of performing abortions both domestic and abroad on the American people starkly illustrates the current state of the left’s view of the issue of life and those who have moral objections to abortion.

While the Hyde Amendment does not provide the restrictions on abortion that many pro-life advocates desire, it does act as an olive branch to those who are very uncomfortable with the thought of their tax dollars funding something that seriously violates their consciences. But Congress's failure to renew the Hyde Amendment is more than just a spending issue. It represents the left's continuing efforts to destigmatize abortion. It means that abortion is no longer to be considered so controversial that the federal government could not justify spending money on it.

Further, if the relevant spending provisions go into effect without the Hyde Amendment, it is highly likely that this will increase the number of abortions. The Susan B. Anthony List, a pro-life organization, [estimates](#) that over 2 million abortions have been prevented by the Hyde Amendment. Further, the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion organization, [shared a study](#) that showed that Medicaid recipients in states that use tax dollars to pay for abortions are nearly four times as likely to have an abortion as a non-Medicaid recipient; in states that do not use tax dollars, Medicaid recipients are only 1.6 times as likely as non-recipients.

This current attempt to remove the Hyde Amendment from the federal budget should not come as a surprise. We live in a country where half of our federally elected officials seek to remove any restrictions on abortion, including those that protect a child in the late-term of a pregnancy. Forcing taxpayers to pay for this is just another example of the vast differences between the pro-life movement and the progressive left. The radical nature of today's left is exactly why conservatives and those who support life and liberty need to work together to ensure that the Hyde amendment is included in our federal spending provisions.

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