



District of Columbia: A Brief Review of Provisions in District of Columbia Appropriations Acts Restricting the Funding of Abortion Services

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Summary

The public funding of abortion services for District of Columbia residents is a perennial issue debated by Congress during its annual deliberations on District of Columbia appropriations. District officials have cited the prohibition on the use of District funds as another example of congressional intrusion into local matters. Since 1979, with the passage of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 1980, P.L. 96-93 (93 Stat. 719), Congress has placed some limitation or prohibition on the use of public (federal or District) funds for abortion services for District residents. Since the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of FY2010, the city has been allowed to use its own funds, but not federal funds, for such services.

In an effort to reach final agreement on a FY2011 budget, in order to avert a government-wide shutdown, the Obama Administration and Senate and House leaders agreed to include a provision in H.R. 1473, a bill making full year appropriations, for FY2011 prohibiting the District of Columbia from using federal and District of Columbia raised funds for abortion services, except in cases of rape, incest, or the mother's health was endangered. The inclusion of the provision has generated protest by city officials on the grounds that the restriction on the use of city funds is a violation of home rule.

The authority for congressional review and approval of the District of Columbia's budget is derived from the Constitution and the District of Columbia Self-Government and Government Reorganization Act of 1973 (Home Rule Act). The Constitution gives Congress the power to "exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever" pertaining to the District of Columbia. In 1973, Congress granted the city limited home rule authority and empowered citizens of the District to elect a mayor and city council. However, Congress retained the authority to review and approve all District laws, including the District's annual budget.

This report includes a brief overview of the District of Columbia appropriations process and a discussion of the current debate and legislative history of the abortion provisions included in District of Columbia appropriations acts. It will be updated as events warrant.

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Recent Developments¹

The public funding of abortion services for District of Columbia residents is a perennial issue debated by Congress during its annual deliberations on District of Columbia appropriations. Congress has exercised its constitutional prerogative with respect to this issue by including language in the general provisions of appropriations acts for the District of Columbia. Since 1979, with the passage of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 1980, P.L. 96-93 (93 Stat. 719), Congress has placed some limitation or prohibition on the use of public (federal or District) funds for abortion services for District residents. Since the passage of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of FY2010, the city has been allowed to use its funds, but not federal funds, for such services.

On April 7, 2011, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1363, a short-term continuing resolution intended to fund the federal government through April 15, 2011. The measure, which passed the House by a vote of 247 to 181, included \$12 billion in spending cuts and would have appropriated full-year funding for the Defense Department. Immediately following the House vote, the President signaled, through the issuance of a Statement of Administration Policy, his intent to veto the measure should it reach his desk.² Some Senate Democrats also voiced opposition to the measure. Among the most controversial provisions included in the bill was language that would have restricted the use of both federal and District funds for abortion services. Those provisions were removed from the temporary continuing budget resolution, H.R. 1363, signed into law as P.L. 112-8 by the President on April 9, 2011.

As part of final negotiations over the full-year FY2011 budget, a provision was included in H.R. 1473, prohibiting the use of federal and District of Columbia funds for abortion services, except in cases of rape, incest, or a threat to the health and safety of the mother.³ The inclusion of the provision, as well as another providing federal funding of a school voucher program, has sparked protest from District leaders claiming that such acts are an infringement on local government autonomy and home rule.

Congressional Oversight of the District of Columbia

The authority for congressional review and approval of the District of Columbia's budget is derived from the Constitution and the District of Columbia Self-Government and Government Reorganization Act of 1973 (Home Rule Act).⁴ The Constitution gives Congress the power to "exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever" pertaining to the District of Columbia. In

¹ The discussion in this report deals exclusively with the funding of abortion services as they relate to provisions included in the District of Columbia appropriation acts. For a discussion of the abortion services issue beyond the scope of this report see the following CRS reports: CRS Report 95-724, *Abortion Law Development: A Brief Overview*, by Jon O. Shimabukuro; CRS Report RL33467, *Abortion: Judicial History and Legislative Response*, by Jon O. Shimabukuro; and CRS Report RL34703, *The History and Effect of Abortion Conscience Clause Laws*, by Jon O. Shimabukuro.

² Executive Office of the President of the United States, Office of Management and Budget, Statement of Administration Policy: H.R. 1363 – Department of Defense and Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, April 7, 2011, <http://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/USEOPWHPO/2011/04/01>.

³ H.R. 1473, Division B, Sec. 1572.

⁴ See Article I, Sec. 8, clause 17 of the U.S. Constitution, and Section 446 of P.L. 93-198.

1973, Congress granted the city limited home rule authority and empowered citizens of the District to elect a mayor and city council. However, Congress retained the authority to review and approve all District laws, including the District's annual budget.

Appropriations Process and Components

As required by the Home Rule Act, the city council must approve a budget within 56 days after receiving a budget proposal from the mayor.⁵ The approved budget must then be transmitted to the President, who forwards it to Congress for its review, modification, and approval.⁶

District of Columbia appropriations acts typically include the following three components:

1. *Special federal payments* appropriated by Congress to be used to fund particular initiatives or activities of interest to Congress or the Administration.
2. *The District's operating budget*, which includes funds to cover the day-to-day functions, activities, and responsibilities of the government, enterprise funds that provide for the operation and maintenance of government facilities or services that are entirely or primarily supported by user-based fees, and long-term capital outlays such as road improvements. District operating budget expenditures are paid for by revenues generated through local taxes (sales and income), federal funds for which the District qualifies, fees, and other sources of funds.
3. *General provisions* are typically the third component of the District's budget reviewed and approved by Congress. These provisions can be grouped into several distinct but overlapping categories, with the most predominant being provisions relating to fiscal and budgetary directives and controls. Other provisions include administrative directives and controls; limitations on lobbying for statehood or congressional voting representation; congressional oversight; and congressionally imposed restrictions and prohibitions related to social policy, including abortion services, medical marijuana, needle exchange, and domestic partners.

Abortion Provision in Appropriations Acts

The public funding of abortion services for District of Columbia residents is a perennial issue debated by Congress during its annual deliberations on District of Columbia appropriations. District officials have cited the prohibition on the use of District funds as another example of congressional intrusion into local matters.⁷ Since 1979, with the passage of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 1980, P.L. 96-93 (93 Stat. 719), Congress has placed some limitation or prohibition on the use of public (federal or District) funds for abortion services for District residents.

⁵ 120 Stat. 2028.

⁶ 87 Stat. 801.

⁷ Ben Pershing, "GOP Bill Would Block D.C. Abortion Funding," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2011, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/dc/2011/01/locals_decry_gop_bill_to_block.html.

Restrictions on the Use of Federal Funds: 1979-1988

From 1979 to 1988, Congress restricted the use of federal funds for abortion services to cases where the mother's life was endangered or the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. The District was free to use District funds for abortion services.

Restrictions on the Use of Federal and District Funds: 1989-1993

When Congress passed the District of Columbia Appropriations Act for FY1989, P.L. 100-462 (102 Stat. 2269-9), it restricted the use of District and federal funds for abortion services to cases where the mother's life would be endangered if the pregnancy were taken to term. The inclusion of District funds, and the elimination of rape or incest as qualifying conditions for public funding of abortion services, was endorsed by President Reagan, who threatened to veto the District's appropriations act if the abortion provision was not modified.⁸ In 1989, President George H.W. Bush twice vetoed the District's FY1990 appropriations act over the abortion issue. He signed P.L. 101-168 (103 Stat. 1278) after insisting that Congress include language prohibiting the use of District revenues to pay for abortion services except in cases where the mother's life was endangered.⁹

Restrictions on the Use of Federal Funds: 1994-1995

The District successfully sought the removal of the provision limiting District funding of abortion services when Congress considered and passed the District of Columbia Appropriations Act for FY1994, P.L. 103-127 (107 Stat. 1350). The FY1994 act also reinstated rape and incest as qualifying circumstances allowing for the public funding of abortion services.

Restrictions on the Use of District and Federal Funds: 1996-2009

The District of Columbia Appropriations Act for FY1996, P.L. 104-134 (110 Stat. 1321-91), and subsequent District of Columbia appropriations acts, limited the use of District and federal funds for abortion services to cases where the mother's life was endangered or cases where the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest.

Restrictions on the Use of Federal Funds: 2010

P.L. 111-117, Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2010, removes the prohibition on the use of District funds for abortion services, but maintains the restriction on the use of federal funds for such services except in cases of rape, incest, or a threat to the life of the mother. This was consistent with provisions included in House and Senate measures (H.R. 3170 and S. 1432) appropriating funds for the District of Columbia for FY2010. As part of its budget submission for FY2010, the Obama Administration included in its budget appendix language that would have prohibited the use of federal funds for abortion services, including payment under any health insurance plan that may be funded in part with federal funds. However, this restriction would not

⁸ "District Policies Hit Hard in Spending Bill," *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, vol. XLIV (1988), p. 713.

⁹ "D.C. Bill Vetoed Twice Over Abortion Funding," *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, vol. XLV (1989), p. 757.

have applied if the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest, or the woman suffered from a disorder, injury, condition, or illness that endangered her life. The provision included a clarifying clause that noted that the restriction on the use of federal funds would not prohibit the use of District or private funds for abortion services, except the District's Medicaid matching fund contribution.¹⁰

Current Debate

The Obama Administration's FY2011 budget request included a provision that would have prohibited the use of federal funds for abortion services except in cases of rape or incest, or when the life of the mother would be endangered. The provision would have allowed the District to use locally raised funds for abortion services. During negotiations over the FY2011 budget, government funding of abortion services became a contentious issue. In an effort to reach final agreement on a FY2011 budget, in order to avert a government-wide shutdown, the Obama Administration and Senate and House leaders agreed to include a provision in H.R. 1473, a bill making full year appropriations, for FY2011 prohibiting the District of Columbia from using federal and District of Columbia raised funds for abortion services, except in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother's health was endangered.¹¹ The inclusion of the provision has generated protest by city officials on the grounds that the restriction on the use of city funds is a violation of home rule. On April 11, 2011, Capitol Hill Police arrested 41 individuals, including the Mayor of the District of Columbia, for unlawful assembly during a rally protesting the inclusion of the provision in H.R. 1473.¹²

The Obama Administration's FY2012 budget includes language that would prohibit the use of federal funds for abortion services except in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother's health would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term. Whether the Administration will continue to support this position is unknown at this time.

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¹⁰ Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the United States; Appendix, Washington, DC, May 16, 2009, p. 1209, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/oia.pdf>

¹¹ H.R. 1473, Division B, Sec. 1572.

¹² Ben Pershing, "Mayor, Council Members Are Arrested; D.C Rally Protest Budget Bill Riders that Restrict City Spending," *Washington Post*, April 12, 2011, p. A11, http://www.washingtonpost.com/todays_paper?dt=2011-04-12&bk=A&pg=11.