

# Devastating Assault on Women's Health in America

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*From the Middle East to the Midwest, Let's Stand up for the Rights of Women and Workers*

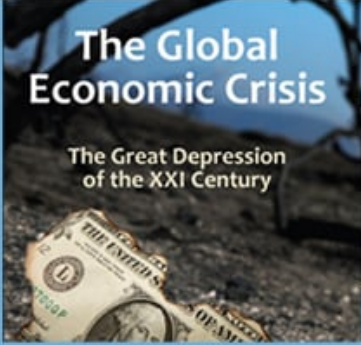
As the world celebrates [Women's History Month](#), the U.S. House of Representatives has just launched the most devastating assault on women's health in the history of our nation – a real case of state violence on a civilian population to achieve political goals.

If the [House-passed bill](#) is approved by the Senate and is signed into law by President Obama, Title X will be eliminated. Title X provides basic health services, including Pap smears, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, and cancer screenings to more than 5 million low-income people, disproportionately women, at a cost that is a fraction of the cost of waging at least two wars of aggression and funding over 700 overseas military bases and at least 6,000 such bases in the United States and its territories.

This bill would also cut \$210 million from Maternal and Child Health Block Grants, that also serve poor women and children; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would see a major cut in its funding, of \$755 million, that would undermine a host of public health efforts, such as confronting HIV/AIDS; and Community Health Centers would see a \$1.3 billion dollar cut that would brutally curtail services in a network of health centers in cities and rural areas providing essential primary care — so much for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) expansion of funds for community clinics.

And it gets worse, and does not stop at our nation's shores. The same legislation would also eliminate funding for the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNPF\)](#), the agency providing family planning, maternity care, and sexually transmitted diseases prevention services, among many other services essential to women's wellbeing, in some 150 countries.

This onslaught against women joins the one against working people generally, as calls to “save” Social Security and Medicare by slashing these programs multiply, and [an increasing number of state legislators attempt to gut the collective bargaining rights of unions](#) with the spurious argument that public sector employees just “earn too much” and receive “too generous benefits”.



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While the subtleties of the discourse differ, not only the right but also [sectors of the “liberal left”](#), convey the same message: workers with “generous benefits” must give them up, because it is those “benefits” that caused “the deficit”.

But just what are these “generous benefits”?

The benefits of Wall Street we know well, even if they figure nowhere in these arguments. As President Obama noted (with a straight face) in this year’s State of the Union address, [“the stock market has come roaring back and corporate profits are up.”](#)

Yet the “benefits” of the US welfare state are paltry compared to those enjoyed by millions of individuals in similarly wealthy nations – in terms of public pensions, paid vacations, and maternity leave, to mention a few. And the United States stands alone in that it lacks guaranteed access to health care. The new federal law barely gave us an obligation to purchase an insurance policy from commercial insurers, under penalty of a fine, and [would leave at least 23 million individuals \(5% of the US population\) with no coverage whatsoever ten years out of passing this law](#). It would also leave a yet-to-be-estimated number of individuals burdened by medical bills that they cannot pay, as new “consumer-driven insurance products”, with actuarial values as low as 60%, huge co-pays, and deductibles, multiply.

As to the much trumpeted deficit, as Dean Baker at the Center for Economic and Policy Institute reminds us, before the latest economic downturn the federal budget deficit was relatively modest – [just over 1% of GDP in 2007](#), even with the cost of fighting two wars and Bush’s tax cuts (that anti-deficit crusaders remain blissfully silent about). The size of the deficit then certainly posed no danger to the economy.

But then everything collapsed, as an \$8 trillion housing bubble burst, [a bubble caused by the policies endorsed or even legislated by the same individuals that the Obama Administration has now asked for advice on how to “save” the economy](#) – Pete Peterson, Alan Simpson, Erskin Bowles, among many others. So where were these anti-deficit crusaders between 2002 and 2006? They were, of course, crying wolf against...the deficit caused by the “generous benefits” of US workers.

And now, with 25 million people unemployed or underemployed, ten million underwater in their mortgages, [over 50 million uninsured](#), and [45,000 dying every year for lack of access to basic medical care](#), these same economic geniuses are warning us against the “impending catastrophe” wrought by the “generous” salaries of public employees, the “Cadillac services” of minimally decent health insurance policies, programs providing basic

health care to poor women, men, children and the elderly, Social Security, or Medicare.

Yet Social Security poses no major problem – [it is projected to be fully solvent for almost 30 years with no changes whatsoever](#). Whichever problems it may have could be easily fixed by simply raising the cap on taxable income, a move that would affect only the wealthy. Medicare and other publicly financed healthcare programs pose a problem only because the US health care system, pre and post PPACA, is built upon a losing proposition: for-profit health insurance for medically necessary services.

It needn't be this way. From the Middle East to the US Midwest ordinary people are demanding greater political participation and a share in the national wealth that they and only they overwhelmingly produce. As we commemorate those 15,000 brave women who back in 1908 marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights, American women and working Americans generally must demand no less.

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