

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, are deeply concerned about the role of the United States in promoting international development, protecting the global environment and improving the lives and health of women and families around the world, and we are opposed to the nomination of Ellen Sauerbrey to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Installed as a recess appointment in January 2006, Ms. Sauerbrey's tenure is set to end when Congress adjourns in December. President Bush has resubmitted her nomination. It is our hope that you will reject her nomination, allowing this appointment to expire, and then request a qualified nominee to head this important bureau that provides critical leadership in US humanitarian efforts around the world.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration—with a budget close to \$1 billion and primary responsibility for admitting tens of thousands of refugees annually and for facilitating critical relief and financial support to family planning programs in the developing world—is no place for a partisan, political operative. While the bureau publicly claims that it “reflect[s] the best humanitarian traditions of the American people,” under Ms. Sauerbrey it has been woefully inadequate in promoting policies and showcasing expertise that provide for responsible and effective family planning. Instead, it has served to promote ideological policies that divide and hurt the very populations it was meant to serve.

Here are a few examples of what happens when an unqualified political operative is chosen to head a critical State Department bureau in which she has no experience:

- Barely a year into her term, Sauerbrey's lack of diplomatic judgment was publicly called into question by 19 Members of the European Parliament who accused her of orchestrating a “diplomatic faux pas” and giving the “official U.S. government stamp of approval to extremist and intolerant views” by not only representing the United States government at the anti-family and anti-contraception World Congress of Families, organized by the Howard Center for Family Religion and Society, but also by being a featured speaker. Extremist viewpoints represented at the conference included “prejudiced attitudes toward foreigners, people from other religions, homosexuals, and the inclusive vision of what represents a family unit that has been developed by the United Nations and the European Union” according to the public letter from the Parliamentary Working Group on Separation of Religion and Politics. One speaker at the event was critical of couples who choose to have no children or one child, accusing them of “a lack of respect for the authority of the state.” Another urged women to stop rebelling against male power, since men are their natural protectors.
- Ms. Sauerbrey remains an opponent of reproductive health and family planning, which are often the most critically needed services for refugee women, the very population she was appointed to serve. Unlike her predecessor, Arthur Gene

Dewey, a Bush appointee with considerable international and refugee experience, Ms. Sauerbrey has made no significant or recognizable effort to resolve the administration's long-standing refusal to fund UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Currently, over 180 nations provide financial support to UNFPA and the United States' refusal to support this UN agency costs women their health and lives every day.

Ms. Sauerbrey's appointment is wrong for vulnerable women and families around the world, and will further undermine the historic leadership role the United States has played in supporting programs that give all couples the right to freely and responsibly choose the number, spacing and timing of their children.

The United States Senate can begin to reverse the damage done by rejecting the nomination of Ellen Sauerbrey and demanding a qualified nominee to this important post.

Sincerely,

Population Connection
Catholics For Choice
International Women's Health Coalition
NARAL Pro-Choice America
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Ipas
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Americans for UNFPA
Center for Health and Gender Equity
NOW
Sierra Club
International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region
Women's Environment and Development Organization
SIECUS
Advocates for Youth
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
National Council of Jewish Women
Center for Reproductive Rights