

Democrats introduce push to allow foreign aid to fund abortions

Senate Democrats continue to struggle with optics of Roe response

John Bowden

A group of Senate Democrats are introducing a bill to allow US foreign aid to fund **abortions** as millions of US women are on the verge of having that very right rescinded.

The legislation introduced on Thursday by Sen **Cory Booker** and nearly two dozen cosponsors would amend the Foreign Assistance Act and repeal the so-called Helm Amendment, a provision of the act which forbids US foreign aid funds from being applied to organisations that fund abortion services, including in the case of rape, incest or other factors that are often considered by lawmakers including the health of the expectant mother.

The bill is being led by New Jersey's Cory Booker, and similar legislation has been released in the House by Illinois Congresswoman **Jan Schakowsky**.

It likely has no hope of passing the Senate under the current political reality of the upper chamber. Democrats have a 50-50 majority in the chamber and at least one of their number, Sen Joe Manchin, opposes overturning the Hyde Amendment which like the Helm Amendment restricts the use of federal funding for abortion services.

Still, the effort is a sign that Senate Democrats are looking for ways to respond to the Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v Wade* last month that has thrown abortion rights into question for millions of Americans. The Democratic Party as a whole has struggled to respond to that development given their need to secure votes from 10 Republicans in the Senate to pass any major legislation. Their base, meanwhile, is hungry for action in response to the end of federal protections for abortion rights.

In a press release Mr Booker said that Democrats “must take immediate action to mitigate the global impact of this decision,” referring to the Supreme Court’s ruling, though it remains unclear what action the party will take domestically in the near future to preserve those same rights.

"We know that in the wake of *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health*, Americans will be denied access to essential health care services across the United States; however, the repercussions also go beyond our borders. This disastrous decision will be felt around the world, setting back many countries who have long used *Roe v. Wade* as the basis to strengthen abortion rights protections in their own countries,” said Mr Booker.

Some Republicans have celebrated the Court’s ruling on *Roe* in recent weeks and declared that abortion as an issue should be left to the states; others are espousing the goal of pursuing a national ban at the federal level.