Talking Points: Foreign Assistance Funding

MEETING CHECKLIST

When you meet with a Senator, Congressman, Congresswoman or staffer:

✓ Thank him/her for rejecting the Administration’s proposed cuts to the foreign assistance.

✓ Ask that the Member protect funding for anti-poverty foreign assistance in fiscal year 2019 by funding overall FY19 foreign assistance at the total FY17 level ($59.1 billion).

✓ Deliver the message that even small cuts to anti-poverty and humanitarian accounts are dangerous. Explain that given the number of global threats and crises, investments in foreign assistance are more critical than ever.

✓ Try to get a commitment. “Will you or the Member commit to restoring the total foreign assistance budget to the total FY17 level of $59.1 billion?”

THE ASK

We are here to ask you/your Member of Congress to:


2. Fund overall FY 2019 foreign assistance at the total FY 2017 level ($59.1 billion).

TALKING POINTS

1. Life-saving foreign assistance funding represents less than 1% of the federal budget.

2. Foreign assistance is a smart investment. It saves millions of lives, spreads America’s values, and contributes to our national security by addressing human needs. These programs are the welcomed face of America in many countries.

3. Global needs continue to grow, and we cannot step away from U.S. leadership at this urgent time.
   a. Famine is threatening South Sudan, Northern Nigeria, Yemen, and areas of Somalia. It is unprecedented to see famine-like conditions in four countries simultaneously.
   b. New and intensifying conflicts in Myanmar, Central Africa, and the Horn of Africa have added hundreds of thousands of people to those with urgent needs. Other countries look to the U.S. to lead.
   c. Erratic and extreme weather and pests are threatening the food and livelihoods of already fragile communities.

4. Foreign assistance is a hand-up, not a handout. It addresses the root causes of poverty and decreases dependency. Since 2011, in countries where the U.S. works with local and women farmers:
   • Poverty rates have decreased an average of 19%
   • 9 million fewer people live in poverty
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- 1.8 million children are living free from the devastating cognitive and physical effects of stunting.

5. Foreign assistance is effective. Thanks to foreign assistance, every year:
   - 267,000 babies born HIV-free thanks to treatment for their mothers during pregnancy
   - Nearly 4 million people gaining access to clean water, and
   - 56.1 million people who are facing hunger or famine receiving life-saving food assistance.

6. The U.S. cannot waste the progress we have made or back away from our global leadership in addressing human needs. Even small cuts to foreign assistance funding could result in lives lost, a depletion of U.S. leadership, and a more dangerous world.

BACKGROUND AND THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Congress passed a two-year budget deal in March 2018 which allowed them to quickly finalize the delayed funding bills for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. Congress is now diving straight into FY2019 funding bills, as the 2019 fiscal year starts in October 2018.

While Congress rejected the Administration’s requested cuts and protected most of the development and humanitarian accounts in the finalized FY18 bills, the recent two-year budget deal is slated to cut foreign assistance funding by $4 billion in FY19.

Congress can and must replace this funding, but they need the political will to do so!

The Administration’s FY19 proposed budget once again requests unprecedented, deep and disproportionate cuts of 30% to overall foreign assistance. Critical development and humanitarian accounts were targeted once again by the Administration, including proposals to end international food aid and cut anti-poverty development programing by 43%.

Thankfully, many congressional members from across the political spectrum are clear that the Administration’s FY19 request is “dead on arrival.” However, because of the recent budget deal vital, life-saving foreign assistance are still not safe from cuts that could put millions at risk.

Congress is currently experiencing a high number of retirements, and many of those leaving are champions for foreign assistance. These changes are hitting just as Congress is about to make big funding decisions, which sometimes means things like foreign assistance funding can get lost in the mix. This changing landscape, combined with the recent congressional budget deal’s slated cuts to overall foreign assistance funding in FY19, leaves funding for life-saving programs vulnerable.

Congress needs to hear from you now: fund the overall FY19 foreign assistance budget at the total FY17 level of $59.1 billion.