

March 21, 2007

Dear Colleague,

As the Senate considers the FY2008 Budget Resolution, we write to urge your support for an amendment we are offering to restore funding for the International Affairs budget in the function 150 Account to the Administration's original request. The Chairman's mark approved by the Budget Committee provides only \$37.6 billion to this account, under funding our diplomatic efforts by some \$2.2 billion. The President requested \$39.8 billion for the civilian side of our national security budget to support the people and programs devoted to strengthening alliances, promoting peaceful relations among nations, boosting economic development and eliminating poverty, and explaining U.S. policy abroad.

The International Affairs budget constitutes only 1.2% of federal spending, yet it is responsible for the essential programs of our diplomatic service, foreign assistance, international health efforts, and emergency relief operations. These programs are critical to the war on terror, enabling the U.S. Government to help shape proactively and positively key regions of the world vitally important to U.S. interests. The 9/11 Commission Report tells us that investing in international affairs programs today will help reduce the costs of having to engage militarily for humanitarian or other reasons in troubled regions in the future.

The United States has a strong record in pursuing peace and fighting poverty overseas, yet the challenges we face require us to do more. Over one billion people still lack access to clean water and sanitation, and every 15 seconds another child dies from a water-related disease. Seventy-seven million children, mostly young girls, will not have the opportunity to attend primary school. Fortunately, there are affordable and proven solutions to overcoming these challenges. The only thing we lack is the will to fund their implementation.

U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance represent the most important tools Americans have to forge stability, create opportunity throughout the developing world, and defeat extremism. We urge you to vote for our amendment to restore the International Affairs Budget to the full level requested by President Bush so the United States can continue to expand our flagship role in the fight for freedom, prosperity and peace throughout the world.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely

Chris Orto

Sam Brownback - Nick Leger

Norm Coleman John Summer