



The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 16, 2011

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing today in regards to the House Committee on Appropriations' proposed spending levels for the State and Foreign Operations spending bill. While we understand the difficult fiscal environment in which the Committee is operating, the proposed cuts to the State and Foreign Operations budget are disproportionately high, posing a serious danger to the United States' national security, and ability to effect important changes overseas.

As you are aware, funding for America's foreign assistance currently makes up about one percent of our overall annual budget. Yet, the proposed spending levels for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 would cut State and Foreign Operations spending by 8 percent. In contrast, as the Department of Defense hands over an increased amount of its operating duties in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the diplomats at the State Department and USAID, the budget request for Department of Defense operations for FY 2011 *increased* over current spending levels.

We are particularly concerned as to how these cuts will affect America's ability to advocate effectively for democracy and human rights. Funding for democracy and human rights programs currently makes up less than one-tenth of one percent of the total budget. These programs support democratic institutions, foster political participation, and aid human rights protection in countries around the world. As we watch the ongoing developments in the Middle East and elsewhere, the importance of these initiatives cannot be lost. The United States is in a position to help support the people-driven push for freedom in countries that suffer under repressive regimes. Civil society groups, free media, and human rights advocates in fledgling or hopeful democracies often look to the U.S. for leadership and support as they fight for the right to have a voice in their own government. It is in our long-term interest, and the interest of our national security, to assist these grassroots efforts for freedom.

Again, we appreciate the constricted fiscal environment in which you work, but urge you to protect the international programs that go so far in promoting United States interests around the

world. The benefits gained by making this investment, and the potential for grave consequences if we don't, far outweigh the small fiscal benefits of cutting these programs.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
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Douglas Rutzen
President and CEO
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Jamie M. Fly
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