

SPREAD FREEDOM, NOT WOKE VALUES: AN AMERICAN AGENDA FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HEARING

OF THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Thursday, May 8, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:06 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Maria Elvira Salazar [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Ms. SALAZAR. Good morning to all of you. The Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere will come to order.

The purpose of this hearing is to discuss democracy and human rights in the United States foreign policy for the purposes of the State Department reauthorization bill.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR

As I said, today, we are here to examine the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. That has been a core mission of the United States since we became the modern world's first true democracy in 1776.

Our country was founded on inalienable rights, the ones that are fundamental, like freedom of speech, religion, to own private property, and freedom of religion, and many others. But, unfortunately, this Bureau has shifted its focus dangerously away from promoting these rights to promoting wokeness in the last few years, and here are some of the examples: In Mexico, for instance, \$250,000 for an NGO that was promoting sex workers; in Costa Rica, \$1.5 million for LGBTI elders; in Colombia, \$47,000 for a transgender opera; in Peru, 32,000 for a gay sex education comic book for children; and, in Ireland, \$70,000 for a musical promoting diversity. What does that have to do with democracy? The irony is that these are progressive countries that protect civil liberties already. They did not need any more funds to pursue that purpose.

As this wokeness crusade plays out in free countries like I just mentioned, the real enemies of freedom, like Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, go sometimes unchallenged. We ignore freedom of religion in Nicaragua, and over 150 Catholic priests were being arrested and some of them disappeared. While we ignore free speech in Cuba for shouting "libertad" on the streets, anyone lands in jail. While we ignore freedom of the press in Venezuela, 12 jour-

nalists are imprisoned for exposing the truth about Maduro's stolen election and what he signed with President Biden called the Barbados accords.

Unfortunately, the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights has been ignoring its mission, and it should be clear: Defend freedom, support the oppressed, and stand up to tyrants. The conversation we need to have today is how do we go back to basics and defend freedom and democracy in our backyard and around the world. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Now, I will recognize the ranking member of this illustrious subcommittee, Mr. Castro from Texas.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairwoman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER JOAQUIN CASTRO

Thank you to our witnesses for your coming testimony, and a special thank you to our former colleague, Tom Malinowski, for coming back to guide us with his expertise and wisdom. And, Tom, we still have your old placard here that we will give to you at the end of the hearing. Welcome back.

We, the United States, started the year as the most powerful, most prosperous, and influential Nation on earth. Today, we find ourselves with a shrinking economy, badly damaged relationships around the world, including with allies, and dwindling influence for future years.

Let me start by addressing the framing of today's hearing. The phrase "spread freedom, not woke values" isn't just a slogan. It is really a misrepresentation of what American foreign policy has stood for across Republican and Democratic administrations alike.

Let's be clear. Supporting democracy, human rights, and civil society is not some recent ideological agenda. It is who we are. These values are American values. They are why people around the world have looked to our country as a beacon for hope. Unfortunately, what we have seen over the last 4 months is a full-scale retreat from those values.

Under the Trump administration, foreign assistance programs have been slashed. Support for human rights defenders, civil society organizations, labor organizers, and many others have been cut, sometimes overnight, and without notice or even explanation. Offices that stood against atrocity crimes, protected the rights of women, and fought human trafficking have been closed or swallowed up in bureaucracies where their missions are being sidelined.

The President budget proposes an 85 percent cut to diplomacy and development programs. It eliminates funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, a bipartisan institution that has supported democratic movements for generations. This isn't reform. It is sabotage. And the consequences are stark. We will pay the price as Americans for generations to come.

I want to paint a picture for my colleagues. Imagine you live in Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, China, or one of other despotic societies. You believe rightly in your people's right to a democratic government that is accountable to the people. You work with the United States to organize your community, document your regime's abuses, or advocate for something as basic as free elections. You

work with groups like the International Republican Institute to travel to the United States and meet people from all over the world who want the same thing. You do this while putting yourself and your family at great personal, often physical risk.

Then one day, with no notice or explanation, Elon Musk and a group of kids walk into the State Department or USAID and—without understanding any of this or its significance or its history—they illegally end these vital, lifesaving programs, and the funding overnight disappears, the program vanishes, and your security—your own personal security for you and your family—is threatened.

The American Government you have worked with stops answering your calls because the Trump administration has prevented them from explaining why the funding has stopped. Members of Congress demand answers, and the administration refuses to give them and remains silent. You read the news and see that your government's officials are celebrating Donald Trump's decision. You are all alone now, abandoned, and at the mercy of the regime that you had the courage to take on with the support of the United States at one time.

The message from President Trump and the State Department is clear: This administration does not value democracy or human rights. If you want help, go somewhere else. This is not a hypothetical. This has played out in dozens, if not hundreds of cases across the world over the past 4 months.

We know that the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, DRL, is more than a symbol. It is the institutional backbone of our democracy promotion efforts. Congress established it by law to serve as an independent voice within our foreign policy, one that doesn't defer to political convenience or the sensitivity of authoritarian leaders. It has statutory obligations from the Foreign Assistance Act, to the Leahy Laws, to the country reports on human rights practices. It is meant to speak up for the people of other countries, not just their governments or their leaders.

And, yet, the administration's reorganization plan proposes removing DRL's policy voice and redistributes its foreign assistance work to regional bureaus with no human rights expertise. That is not reform. It is about erasing human rights from our foreign policy. It is announcing that we don't care what despotic leaders do to their people around the world, and we are not going to watch them anymore.

The administration wanted to make foreign assistance more effective. If they wanted to make it more effective, they would have strengthened DRL's role, not sidelined it. And so Congress must step up. The administration has already effectively ended USAID and hundreds of foreign assistance programs established by law, all without input from the Congress, and the State Department has proposed a sweeping and destructive reorganization plan by July. I urge my colleagues, especially my Republican colleagues, to assert Congress' rights under Article I of the Constitution and demand accountability from this administration.

With that, Chairwoman, I yield back.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Ranking Member, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Castro.

Now, other members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this important topic, starting with the honorable Robert Destro, the former assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the Department of State. Welcome, sir. It is wonderful to hear your statements.

Mr. DESTRO. Madam Chair.

Ms. SALAZAR. We also have Patrick Quirk, vice president of strategy, innovation, and impact at the International Republican Institute.

Finally, the honorable Tom Malinowski, former Member of Congress—I remember serving with you the first term—and former assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the Department of State.

Now, this committee recognizes the importance of the issue before us and is grateful to have you here to speak with us today. Your full statements will be made part of the record, and I will ask you to keep it to 5 minutes in order to allow time for other member questions.

I recognize Mr. Destro for his opening statement. Welcome once again, sir.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT A. DESTRO

Mr. DESTRO. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Castro. Thank you for your comments.

I am going to try and keep it brief, but one of the things I think we should see here—and I am really happy that you have Tom Malinowski and Patrick Quirk here because this is—what you are looking at, I think, is a great working group. What we need to do—it is not a question of whether we are committed to human rights. We wouldn't be here unless we were.

You know, what we are concerned about here is we have—now we have, I think, a once-in-a-several-generation opportunity to look at the organization of State. Secretary Rubio has given you the proposed, you know, reorganization. Lots of questions about that in my mind, too.

I particularly have the same concerns as you do, Mr. Castro, about, you know, giving it all to the regionals. I am not so sure about that.

You know, but what we need to be looking at is we have an opportunity here for Congress and the President to be working together to optimize it because the country is not made of money. We can't afford to—we should be spending on human rights, and I completely agree with that. You know, but whatever the disagreements we might have, you know, we need to be focusing on the outcomes of our programs. I mean, and that is something we just don't do.

So what I would begin with, basically, is inviting my colleagues here and offering our services to the staff, if I can, you know, to say let's sit down around a table and start talking about some of the hard questions.

And so one of the hardest questions is that—I think we often need to put our areas of disagreement out on the table. The first one is even in the title of the hearing. It is not freedom versus

woke. My friends who would proudly describe themselves as woke see themselves as just as committed to freedom as I do. In fact, my son coached at a university that had its woke rating right on its website.

You know, so it is a—so I see the issues we have as one of process. If our goal is to spread freedom and foster inclusiveness, sovereignty, and interdependence—because that is really what we are talking about is the interdependence of our people and the people of these—who live under repressive regimes or who live in pretty good places. We must look at how the State Department actually operates.

Now, spreading freedom is a laudable goal, you know, but the hard question is how successful has the State Department actually been? What are the outcomes? You might want to start with asking the people of Libya, where our regime change operations and democracy building has left them with slave markets. You know, you can ask the people of Guatemala or Venezuela or Cuba. You know, how many years have we been working on Cuba, and we don't seem to be making much progress. There is a lot of money been spent on that. What is our return on investment? I would argue not very much. So whatever we are doing, it is not working.

So I have seen with my own eyes, you know, that the—how other organizations—it is not just State. It is not just USAID. It is all of it, including the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

You know, I just got a text this morning from a friend in Belize. I have been working with the Belizeans now for several years in a really—their really innovative, wonderful People's Constitution reform process. Our embassy has not been around. You would think they would be helpful, but—and during the conversation within that commission, one of the huge issues for the people of Belize—they have had town meetings all over the place—is control of their—control of education. Just this week, one of our government-funded NGO's came in and basically offered a school money to buy control of their education program, exactly at odds with the proposition that we are arguing here.

So what I would suggest to you is that—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is everybody has a right to participate in their government. The question around this table ought to be how do we make that happen. We know where it is not happening. We know where it is happening. And I can tell you, having been the assistant secretary like Tom Malinowski has—is when you direct money flows, that is where the policy actually hits the road.

I am going to leave it at that, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Destro follows:]

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere

SPREAD FREEDOM, NOT WOKE VALUES:
 AN AMERICAN AGENDA FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
 Thursday, May 8, 2025

**Statement of Robert A. Destro*,
 Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)
 (2019-2021) and Special Representative for Tibetan Issues (2020-2021)**

Madam Chair Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for scheduling this hearing, and for inviting my predecessor as DRL Assistant Secretary, the Honorable Tom Malinowski, and Dr. Patrick Quirk, the Vice President of Strategy, Innovation, and Impact for the International Republican Institute (IRI). I am honored to be with them and with you today. I look forward to hearing not only what my colleagues have to say, but also to responding to your questions.

A year ago, on June 4, 2024, I testified before the HFAC Subcommittee on Oversight and Accountability about the need for Congress to enact legislation requiring transparency and accountability in all unclassified foreign assistance programs. I want to renew that call today. The findings made by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and Secretary Rubio's proposed reorganization plan for the State Department underscore the need for Congressional action.

During my June 2024 testimony, I made the following points.

1. **Money is one of the most important tools used by the United States Government [USG] to project power and influence. Foreign assistance flows provide the “carrot” and economic sanctions provide the “stick.” They are opposite sides of the same coin.**¹
2. **Most Americans have no idea a) how much “foreign assistance” the USG provides; b) for what purposes; or c) for what ends.**
3. **Congress has not imposed any enforceable transparency and accountability standards.**
4. **There is no meaningful transparency or oversight *within or among* the agencies administering foreign assistance programs.**
5. **When Congress writes what are, in effect, blank checks to grant-making bureaucracies, each bureaucracy that administers foreign assistance funds has its own foreign policy.**
6. **Lack of transparency in Washington has real-world consequences overseas.**
7. **Congress has the power of the purse but has effectively ceded control over the expenditure of billions of dollars in domestic or foreign grant and contract programs**

* Professor of Law, The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, Washington, D.C. I offer these remarks in my individual capacity. They reflect only my own views, not those of the University, its faculty, staff, or students.

¹ See Nicholas Mulder, *THE ECONOMIC WEAPON: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

to an unelected bureaucracy that rejects transparency and accountability to both Congress and the President.

The bottom line: Federal bureaucracies have their own foreign policies. The NGOs and “Beltway Bandits,” to whom they subcontract the field work, carry it out.

I. HARMONIZING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WITH THE PRESIDENT’S VISION OF AN AMERICA FIRST FOREIGN POLICY

On January 20, 2025, President Trump ordered Secretary Rubio to “issue guidance bringing the Department of State’s policies, programs, personnel, and operations in line with an America First foreign policy, which puts America and its interests first.”²

From my perspective as former Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the President’s order is welcome – and long overdue. So too is this hearing. Thank you, Madam Chair, for inviting me to participate and to share my views and experience.

A. Unpacking the title: “Spread Freedom, not Woke Values: An American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights.”

According to the published notice for the hearing, our focus today is how a truly *American* foreign policy can get back to its traditional focus on “spreading freedom.” Whether intended or not, the Subcommittee has implicitly suggested that an “American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights” *requires* an American foreign policy that “spreads freedom.”

I agree. So too, I argue below, did both our first and third Presidents, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. The question on the table is *how*.

B. The “DOGE” Effect: Transparency and Accountability

The answer to the “*how* question” is easy: Presidential leadership and a Secretary of State empowered by the President to exercise *tight* control over *all* personnel who conduct American foreign policy. President Trump’s executive orders, memoranda, and speeches provide that leadership, and he has made it clear that Secretary Rubio has all the powers he needs assert control, not only over the State Department, but also over USAID and the National Security Council.

Unleashing DOGE on State, USAID, the Treasury, HHS, and other federal agencies was a necessary “first step.” As I testified in June 2024, without knowing where the money goes, who spends it, and for what purpose(s), we have no idea what our foreign policy *is*, much less whether it spreads “freedom” or “woke values.” And – unless we know what our policy *is*, we cannot even begin to evaluate whether it has been “successful.”

So, let me take this opportunity to thank the President for authorizing Elon Musk and his DOGE team to conduct their long-overdue audit of federal expenditures. No matter who conducts an audit – whether it be DOGE, the IRS, or an independent auditor for a small business – the process can be a tense, unpleasant, and have dire consequences. Rather than blame Elon Musk and his team for what some in the legacy and social media decry as “chaos”, we should have the courage and intellectual

² America First Policy Directive to the Secretary of State at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/america-first-policy-directive-to-the-secretary-of-state/> (accessed May 6, 2025).

honesty to start asking hard questions. *Someone's* questionable behavior over the generations years has put the present livelihoods and job security of highly qualified, dedicated public employees and private contractors at risk. Let us use the present moment to identify the oversight and accountability problems DOGE has highlighted and then go fix them!

II. FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY REQUIRE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY RUBIO GET THE BUREAUCRACY – AND THE NGO-INDUSTRIAL FOREIGN POLICY COMPLEX IT SUPPORTS – UNDER THE CONTROL OF POLITICALLY ACCOUNTABLE “OFFICERS OF THE UNITED STATES.”

The Founders of our great Nation understood that *fiscal* accountability and transparency are among the prerequisites for maintaining freedom possible within the structures of our representative democracy. Among the checks and balances that make our votes count are the reservation of the power to initiate tax bills to the House, U.S. Const. art. I §7, and the reservation to Congress of the power of the purse in art. I §9, cl. 7: “No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law”. Article I §9 also presumes that the Executive will cooperate in the auditing and oversight process. The President has the veto power, art. I §7, cl. 2, and the command of art. I §9, cl. 7 that “a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time” necessarily requires the Executive Branch participate in the effort. Freedom also abhors corruption of any sort, particularly those involving financial and positional conflicts of interest by both Members and Senators and by any “Person holding any office or Trust under” the United States. *See* art. I §6, cl. 3-4; art. I §9, cl. 8.

President Trump, Secretary Rubio, and Chairman Mast have condemned the bureaucratic excesses uncovered by DOGE. I will not recount them here, but I do thank Chairman Mast for highlighting some of those excesses in a closed-door briefing held on January 16, 2025, shortly before the Inauguration. I attach the briefing document for the record.³ The excesses and counter-productive uses supported with the hard-earned money of American taxpayers are, to say the least, “disturbing.”

But my focus today is not on “excess;” that is, what is commonly called “fraud, waste, and abuse.” I am happy DOGE has been able to do the sleuth work. I hope it continues, and hope that those responsible for “fraud, waste, and abuse” will be held accountable.

Today, however, my testimony is about the need for the President and Secretary Rubio to get our foreign policy bureaucracy under *policy* control. Without full transparency to those whose commissions invest them with the authority to assist the President in his constitutional duty under Article II to ensure that the laws are “faithfully executed,” there is neither Presidential control over foreign policy, nor any meaningful power of the purse.

Ensuring political accountability is neither an abstract concept nor an academic question. Lack of transparency and accountability in foreign affairs has “real world” consequences, including, but not limited to, useless, forever wars, cultural imperialism, unfettered migration, and human misery. All governments, including our own, are suspicious of individuals and organizations who operate within their respective territories and serve the interests of a “foreign principal.”⁴

³ Republican Guidance Memorandum, “America First Diplomacy: Examining Spending in the Biden State Department & Ensuring Future Aid Advances America’s National Security, January 16, 2025, at 9:00 AM, 2172 Rayburn House Office Building (copy attached and submitted for the record).

⁴ *See* Foreign Agent Registration Act [FARA], 22 U.S.C. §611(c)(d) (requiring registration by any person, entity, or organization serving as an “agent of a foreign principal”); <https://www.justice.gov/nsd-fara/frequently-asked-questions>

By statute, Congress has provided that, subject to the supervision of the President and the Secretary of State,

The Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor *shall maintain continuous observation and review all matters pertaining to human rights and humanitarian affairs (including matters relating to prisoners of war and members of the United States Armed Forces missing in action) in the conduct of foreign policy*” 22 U.S.C. §2651a(c)(2)(B) (emphasis added)

Although the plain language of the statute grants the DRL Assistant Secretary authority to require all Bureaus and Offices across the *entire* federal government – not just in State and USAID – to provide detailed information about the nature, purposes, impact, and amounts of their spending *and international activities* on the listed subjects, there is currently no readily accessible way for the Assistant Secretary either to access the information, or to compel its production. I will provide specific examples in my oral testimony.

The DOGE examination, which is ongoing, was a good start. So too was the merger of USAID into the State Department. The President’s Order reinstating “Schedule F” in the excepted service “for those who are in policy-influencing positions,” especially those who control large sums of money, was a further necessary step.⁵

But the biggest challenge lies within the State Department itself. As Secretary Rubio has recently written, we have “a State Department that stifles creativity, lacks accountability, and occasionally veers into outright hostility to American interests.”⁶ And, as I can attest from my own experience, my own policy staff in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor were denied access to information concerning grants and subgrants that had a direct and palpable impact on the policies that the Secretary was trying to implement. When, in December 2019, I promised one of our office directors that I would get her access to the data she needed, her admonition was: “Good luck, sir.”

Even after spending an enormous sum to automate the process by creating a “DRL Dashboard” designed to give the Assistant Secretary and others “real time” access to data drawn from the Office of Foreign Assistance (“F”) database, the prototype was shelved in January 2021 *by the then-DRL front office leadership* as soon as the Trump 45 Administration came to a close. Accountability and transparency, it appears, is too much to ask of bureaucrats who believe (or who have been encouraged by policy experts to believe) that they are “independent.” The result is the unseemly mess in which we find ourselves. No matter how well-qualified and dedicated, neither foreign service officers nor civil

(accessed May 5, 2025). As I pointed out in June 2024, Georgia was, at the time, the most recent country to adopt a law requiring all “organizations pursuing the interests of a foreign power” to register with its government. India’s Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) speaks to the same issue. **Georgia:** See JAM News, “Venice Commission urges Georgia to repeal ‘foreign agents’ bill”, *JAM News*, 25.05.2024 at <https://jam-news.net/venice-commission-to-georgian-dream/> (accessed May 30, 2024). Links an English translation of Georgia’s new law can be found in the Venice Commission Report. See European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission: Georgia: Urgent Opinion on the Transparency of Foreign Influence issued on 21 May 2024 at [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI\(2024\)013-c#page23](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI(2024)013-c#page23) (accessed May 30, 2024). **India:** Ministry of Home Affairs, at <https://fcraonline.nic.in/home/index.aspx> (accessed May 30, 2024)

⁵ Executive Order, “Restoring Accountability to Policy-Influencing Positions within the Federal Workforce”, January 20, 2025, reinstating Executive Order 13957 of October 21, 2020 (Creating Schedule F in the Excepted Service) at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-to-policy-influencing-positions-within-the-federal-workforce/> (accessed May 6, 2025).

⁶ Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, “A New State Department to Meet the Challenges of a New Era”, U.S. Department of State, Substack at <https://statedept.substack.com/p/a-new-state-department-to-meet-the> (accessed May 6, 2025).

servants are authorized under the Constitution to have their “own foreign policies.” Using taxpayer funds to conduct rogue policies of this type is both illegal *and* unconstitutional.

I fully expect that my colleagues on the panel today will loudly and strenuously disagree. They are participants in what others have dubbed the NGO-Industrial Complex: a revolving door that spins between executive agencies, domestic and foreign NGOs, domestic and foreign think tanks, government contractors, and Congressional offices. But let me be clear. A revolving door saves time and energy by providing highly qualified and experienced foreign policy professionals when and where needed. We want experienced people.

The problem is lack of supervision and the sense of entitlement that comes with not having been subject to meaningful oversight by either the Secretary or the President. So, ignore the complaints about lack of “independence” and “authoritarian” behavior. As Elon Musk aptly observed:

One lesson I remember from the PayPal days: Do you know who complained the loudest? The Fraudsters. There would be immediate over the top indignation from the fraudsters. Normal people will say “I think there’s something wrong.” Fraudsters will come hot out the gate with fake outrage. They’ll claim that they’re a single mom with kids trying to make ends meet, but it’ll be some dude in another country scamming others. We’re going to see some pretty outrageous stuff from the fraudsters as we continue cracking down, they’re going to be the loudest.⁷

Good programs can and will survive, but before reauthorizing them, we need serious, transparent outcome evaluations.

In sum, whatever reorganization plan Secretary Rubio decides to implement, one thing is certain: All foreign policy must be aligned with the President’s vision of an “America First” agenda, and all State and other Department officials who are entrusted with authority to allocate and spent foreign assistance funds – or who administer the ultimate economic weapon: sanctions – *must* be subject to full transparency and accountability by a Senate-confirmed “officer of the United States” who reports to the Secretary of State.

III. Q: HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES “SPREAD FREEDOM” ABROAD?

A: By modeling it at home and in our dealings with foreign nations.

President Trump’s repeated demand that other countries respect our borders, our laws, and the integrity of our institutions is non-negotiable. When we demand that other countries respect our national security and the outcomes of our internal political debates, we are defending representative self-government, as well as *our freedom to disagree among ourselves*. That’s what self-government is all about.

Americans cannot, in good conscience, demand that other nations and peoples respect our sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedoms unless we respect theirs. Self-government is a fundamental human right.⁸

⁷ Noah, “Elon Musk Explains The #1 ‘Tell’ of Those Who Are Guilty”, at <https://100percentfedup.com/elon-musk-explains-1-tell-those-who-are/> (accessed May 5, 2025).

⁸ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21, provides:

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

We are wise, therefore, to bear in mind the wisdom embodied in President George Washington's *Farewell Address*. Our Nation must ...

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct.

... Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.⁹

President Washington's wisdom echoes in the words of our third President, Thomas Jefferson, who believed that our Declaration of Independence was a fundamental choice that, he hoped, would ...

be to the world what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all.) the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which Monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self-government. The form which we have substituted restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view *the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born, with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others.*¹⁰ (emphasis added)

An "America First" foreign policy that respects "democracy" *at home* acknowledges that we, the citizens of the United States, have elected a Congress to represent us here in Washington, and a President to represent us at home and abroad. An "America First" foreign policy demands that our Nation's foreign policy "establishment" – also pejoratively known as "The Blob"¹¹ – accept the proposition that Article II of the Constitution confers upon the President *alone* the power to control American foreign policy, including the expenditure of foreign assistance funds.

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2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
 3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

⁹ George Washington, *Farewell Address*, at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address> (accessed May 6, 2025)

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson, letter to Roger Chew Weightman, written on the occasion of the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, 18 June 1826, in THE PAPERS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON, at <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/jefferson/98-01-02-6179> (accessed May 6, 2025) (capitalization and hyphenation changed from the original).

¹¹ Christopher J. Fettweis, "The Beliefs of the Blob", *Orbis*, v. 67:1, 2-44 (2023) at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2022.12.006> (accessed May 6, 2023).

An “America First” foreign policy demands that the House and Senate not only exercise the powers entrusted to them by Article I, but that they actually use them as “checks and balances.” The Senate should promptly confirm pending nominations, and Congress must empower Senate-confirmed “officers of the United States” with the authority to exercise oversight and control what has become an out-of-control bureaucracy.

Whether the issue is foreign policy at State, surveillance policy at the FBI, immigration policy at Homeland Security, refugee policy at HHS, or False Claims Act enforcement at the Department of Justice, the efforts of DOGE have opened a window on a problem that those of us who have served in government know from experience.

There is no other way to say it: Many of those who have supervised the grant- and contract-making arms of our federal bureaucracies have run them as ATM and money laundries for domestic and foreign NGOs whose programs either make our international relations problems worse or have no measurable effect on them at all. These entities talk a good game on “democracy,” on the environment, and on the rights of workers, but the *outcomes* of all this spending and cultural manipulation – to the extent measured at all – are, in most cases, minimal. I shall provide examples in my oral testimony.

IV. CONCLUSION

I will close these written remarks with the observation that I strongly agree with the other assumption that gave this hearing its title. “Woke Values” (however defined) are, by their nature, inconsistent with human rights and freedoms. Those who proclaim – and ruthlessly enforce – “woke values” deny the very propositions on which this nation was founded.

If all persons are “created equal” and are “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” including “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”, it follows that the very *purpose* of government – and hence of our foreign policy – is “to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”.¹²

However one defines the term, “freedom” cannot exist in a culture driven by “Woke Values.” The structural and substantive protections for individuals and associations provided by institutions of representative self-government – including “due process” – guarantee equal *protection* of the laws. Our Constitution and laws do not, empower a permanent, elite class of professional managers and policy “experts” to command the resources – and hence the labor – of their fellow citizens. Most Americans would never, voluntarily, swear allegiance either to the agenda advancing “Woke” or “Globalist” Values,” or to the spending priorities of their adherents. Those who believe in a “woke” or “globalist” agenda are free argue the merits of these agendas (however dubious they may be), but they may not impose that agenda on the rest of us or hijack our hard-earned tax dollars to impose (or bribe) the leaders and citizens of other countries to adopt them.

In sum, the very best way for The United States to “spread freedom” is for the President and the Secretary to get firm control over the foreign policy “establishment” in Washington and abroad; to stop “contracting out” our efforts to “spread freedom”; and to engage friends, neighbors, and geopolitical rivals, as partners, on a bilateral basis.

¹² U.S. Const. Preamble (1878) at <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/> (accessed May 6, 2025)

Writing in Federalist 4, John Jay put it this way:

the safety of the people of America against dangers from FOREIGN force depends not only on their forbearing to give JUST causes of war to other nations, but also on their placing and continuing themselves in such a situation as not to INVITE hostility or insult; for it need not be observed that there are PRETENDED as well as just causes of war.”¹³ (emphasis in the original)

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share this information, and for the opportunity to testify in person. My oral testimony will provide concrete examples supporting the recommendations I have made in these written comments, such documentation as I have been able to gather to date.

¹³ John Jay, *The Federalist* #4, “Concerning the Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence”.

Ms. SALAZAR. Wonderful. You have changed my whole script. So I am going to ask different questions when I get back to you.

Mr. DESTRO. Okay.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you very much for that—

Mr. DESTRO. Thank you.

Ms. SALAZAR [continuing]. opening statement. Thank you, Mr. Destro.

I recognize Dr. Quirk for his opening statement. Welcome, sir.

STATEMENT OF DR. PATRICK QUIRK

Mr. QUIRK. Thank you. Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here to testify on the reauthorization of the Department of State, including programs through DRL and assistance related to democracy.

I will be summarizing my full written statement and would like to begin by applauding the full committee, notably Chairman Mast, and this subcommittee for their rigorous oversight and review of foreign assistance. Your leadership has enhanced accountability and ensured that programs pointed externally remain on point and continue to be an effective soft diplomacy tool, one that is aligned with diplomatic strategy and complements military strength, economic investment, and humanitarian aid.

Democracy programs—I am here to testify—when executed cost-effectively strengthen American security and prosperity. They foster democratic societies abroad that align with U.S. values, reject terrorism, and resist authoritarian influence from adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and Cuba. These programs, in a very cost-effective way, reduce conflict, mitigate migration pressures, and promote transparent markets that drive U.S. trade and investment, all of which benefits American families here at home.

Three decades ago, U.S. democracy assistance, including by the National Endowment For Democracy, transformed former Soviet Bloc nations. We supported free elections, revitalized parliaments, and guided transitions from single-party rule to multiparty systems. Most of these countries became strong U.S. allies. Poland, Lithuania, and Romania have emerged today as partners countering terrorism and authoritarianism. Poland alone did 24 billion in trade with the U.S. last year. Now, if asked whether supporting Poland in the early 1990's was worth U.S. taxpayer investment, my answer would be yes.

Now, of course, not every country receiving democracy support becomes a Poland, just as not every U.S. military economic or sanctions effort succeeds. However, keeping effective tools in our arsenal is a prudent way to protect American interests in today's volatile world.

In 2025, supporting democracy abroad is increasingly complex. Authoritarian regimes fuel drug trafficking, attack allies, and launch cyber attacks. Others like Venezuela drive migration to U.S. borders, and theocratic regimes like Iran destabilize regions, pulling the U.S. and our soldiers into costly conflicts. The PRC in particular poses unique challenges. Its cyber espionage, intellectual property theft, economic coercion, and influence operations all threaten U.S. security. But democracy programs directly counter

these actions by promoting transparent governance and freedoms as well as complementing efforts like those from the DFC.

Now, Chairman Mast has quite ably exposed the failures of State Department democracy programs, from funding drag shows in Ecuador to atheism promotion in Nepal, but as we chart a path forward, I think we need to be intellectually honest and recognize that there have been many more programs which have not been critically flawed and that do benefit the United States. These include, amongst others, ensuring peaceful electoral processes in Kenya and the Dominican Republic, helping Mongolia—a strategic country situated between China and Russia—for the last 20 years to be a successful democracy, and supporting East Timor as it worked through independence and internal conflict 25 years ago.

Looking ahead, countering PRC influence is indeed a priority and requires a multifaceted strategy. While military readiness and capitalization are necessary in large-scale tools, democracy programs, I would affirm, are modest, cost-effective complements. Just a few examples. In Taiwan, State Department funding has helped expose PRC election meddling. In Sri Lanka, programs to elevate public scrutiny of Chinese port deals. IRI's upcoming work in Ecuador sponsored by the NED will help local organizations and media analyze the harmful effects of predatory PRC investments like the Coca Codo Sinclair Dam like I know you, Madam Chairwoman, are tracking quite closely.

Now, failing to reauthorize the State Department's democracy components—including DRL, the Democracy Fund, and ESF—risks ceding ground to adversaries who exploit democratic weaknesses and undermine our interests. Sunsetting NED would also be detrimental.

To ensure effectiveness, I would urge reauthorization with five considerations amongst others. First, regular audits, clear metrics, and public disclosure while balancing safety for partners in autocratic states. Second, consider using AI to analyze democratic growth data and security tie-ins for better outcomes and evaluation. Third, design programs that must first—before they are funded—articulate how they enhance U.S. security and prosperity. Fourth, refocus funding back to core democracy work: Free elections, political party strengthening, civilian scrutiny of government, amongst others. Fifth and finally, question the point of, quote-unquote, localization.

Accomplishing things is what we want to do on behalf of the American people, not to say we put X percentage of funding into the hands of locals like the goal of the last administration. Helping countries become democratic enhances U.S. security and economic opportunities. I urge you to wisely evaluate the cost of eliminating this vital tool when you are reauthorizing the State Department and democracy programming. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Quirk follows:]

Written Statement of Dr. Patrick W. Quirk

Vice President of Strategy, Innovation and Impact

International Republican Institute (IRI)

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

**Western Hemisphere Subcommittee Hearing, "Spread Freedom, Not Woke
Values: An American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights"**

May 8, 2025

Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for asking me to testify before this Subcommittee on the critical need to reauthorize the Department of State, including programs and assistance related to democracy. My testimony will primarily focus on the efforts and jurisdiction which formerly fell under the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) and that were funded through the Democracy Fund and the Economic Support Fund; however, my testimony will also address efforts covered by State Department and USAID outside of DRL, including those countering the People's Republic of China (PRC) and other authoritarian threats, and programs promoting stabilization.

I would like to begin by applauding the Full Committee and this Subcommittee, and notably Chairman Mast, for the rigorous oversight, review, and reconsideration of U.S. foreign assistance. The Chairman's leadership has exposed misspent dollars, enhanced accountability, and ensured that programs pointed externally remain on-point and continue to be an effective soft-diplomacy tool, one that is aligned with diplomatic strategy, and one that complements military strength, statecraft, economic investment, and humanitarian aid.

As Vice President for Strategy, Innovation, and Impact at the International Republican Institute (IRI), I will focus mainly on democracy programming, particularly through DRL, which I testify contributes to American security and prosperity. When executed smartly and correctly, investments in democracy foster resilient societies abroad that align with U.S. values, reject terrorism, and resist authoritarian influence from adversaries like the PRC, Russia, Iran, and Cuba. Programs, when aligned with American values and implemented cost-efficiently, also reduce conflict, mitigate migration pressures, and promote transparent markets that drive U.S. trade and investment.

Three decades ago, the United States played a pivotal role in supporting democratic transformations in former Soviet-bloc nations across Europe. We helped establish free elections, revitalize long-dormant parliaments, and guide the shift from single-party rule to vibrant multiparty systems. We empowered citizens to form new political parties, strengthened judicial frameworks to ensure credibility, and supported non-state-controlled media in exposing the realities of communist regimes. While some bloc countries swiftly embraced democracy, others faced prolonged transitions or setbacks requiring longer-term forms of assistance.

Ultimately, most countries broke free from Soviet influence and emerged as steadfast U.S. allies. U.S.-funded democracy programs, including from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – along with international broadcasting – served as critical soft-power instruments in fostering Europe’s democratic opening. Today, nations like Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Albania, and Romania stand as vital NATO partners, collaborating to counter terrorism, resist authoritarianism, and prevent conflicts that could involve the U.S. and take the lives of our citizens. These countries are also key economic partners, hosting American investments, engaging in robust trade, and embracing U.S. culture and values.

Poland alone, for example, conducted approximately \$24 billion in trade with the U.S. last year. If someone asks today whether helping Poland in the early 1990s was worth the investment by U.S. taxpayers, it would be impossible to say no. Does every country we invest in with democracy programs turn out to be Poland? Of course not. But not every place where we apply military might, or leverage capitalization, or apply sanctions or tariffs, or where we counter narcotics, turns out well. There are no sure bets. However, keeping tools in your toolbox, especially those that are effective and constitute relatively small investments, is a wise way to protect and advance American interests in today’s volatile world. Democracy assistance is one such tool, albeit one that we must sharpen and reorient back to the way it was designed to be wielded. This is why reauthorization is important.

In 2025, supporting democracy abroad is more complex than it was in the mid-1990s. The U.S. faces diverse threats: authoritarian regimes hostile to America compromise our borders, fuel drug trafficking and crime, attack allies, and engage in unconventional warfare, including cyberattacks. Kleptocratic states like Venezuela drive mass migration to our borders and those of our allies. Theocratic regimes like those ruling Iran, and terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, destabilize regions, kill allies, and pull the U.S. into costly conflicts that raise deficits and claim American

lives. Anarchic and destabilized regions rife with coups and warlords generate human rights abuses, waste precious minerals, and exacerbate migration. Italy's struggle with securing its border speaks to the governance and security challenges driving migration from northern Africa, for example. Nations with next to no freedoms and weak rule of law like Cuba and Belarus, for example, serve as safe havens for anti-American activity as well as illicit crime which then affect American families. Democracy programming should be available as a tool to counter these threats.

China is the preeminent challenge to the United States, and one that requires soft-power tools that democracy programs can offer to counter. As a powerful authoritarian state, China engages in cyber espionage, intellectual property theft, and influence operations that threaten U.S. national security. The PRC's territorial ambitions, particularly in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan, strain relations with allies and risk broader conflict. Like kleptocracies, China's economic coercion and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) create dependencies in less free nations, fostering environments where organized crime and illicit trade can thrive. While not a theocracy, China's suppression of dissent and control over information parallel theocratic regimes' tactics, undermining global democratic norms. These actions, combined with its global economic influence, make China a multifaceted challenge, amplifying the costs and risks for American families and businesses, and complicating democratization worldwide. Democracy programming is used to counter these actions – not exclusively, but in ways that complement other U.S. investments, such as the Development Finance Corporation.

Chairman Mast has led the campaign to call out waste in State Department democracy programs: Drag shows in Ecuador, transgender job fairs, atheism promotion in Nepal. Even before these examples were highlighted last year, true believers in democracy assistance had noted many failures where the United States misused finite taxpayer resources or executed poorly.

- In Pakistan, the State Department was investing in gender-focused initiatives instead of helping the country reform its electoral process.
- In Myanmar, overly broad program designs failed to adapt to the 2021 military coup, limiting support for pro-democracy movements.
- In Bolivia, U.S. government initiatives struggled with slow fund disbursement, delaying support for electoral reforms following the 2019 general elections.

- And for years in Uganda, State Department programs in the early 2010s prioritized broad human rights campaigns that alienated local stakeholders due to cultural disconnects – we saw this play out in 2023.

However, I would submit that there are many more programs which *have not* been critically flawed or administered problematically – and that *do benefit* the United States:

- In Kenya, State Department programs have strengthened electoral integrity, ensuring peaceful transitions in 2017 and 2022, stabilizing a key counterterrorism partner.
- Initiatives in Mongolia have empowered civil society and sustained an important democracy situated between Russia and China. In fact, U.S. funding helped Mongolia build a parliament from scratch.
- In Timor-Leste, State Department-supported projects organized elections, promoted human rights and civic participation, and facilitated peace talks, aiding the young nation’s democratic consolidation since its 2002 independence.
- In Belarus, DRL programs have provided secure communication tools to activists, sustaining resistance against Russia-backed repression.
- In the Dominican Republic, the State Department and USAID enhanced electoral transparency and civil society engagement, contributing to democratic stability in what was once a turbulent Caribbean nation.
- In Iran, State and NED initiatives have trained activists to document human rights abuses, fostering international pressure against the regime. The U.S. has this data on Iran because we support those who not only obtain it but also use it to inform the world.
- In Colombia, DRL and USAID projects, as a complement within Plan Colombia, bolstered many facets of the democratic framework in a country that today has a \$40 billion trade relationship with the United States. Despite challenges in 2025 under mismanagement and socialist aspirations of President Gustavo Petro, our past investments into democracy, human rights, and rule of law have enabled Colombians to withstand pressures that, for example, Venezuelans could not withstand when Hugo Chávez took control two-and-a-half decades ago.

Even democracy programming in regime states like Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua has been worth the investment, despite dictatorships still ruling in Havana, Caracas, and Managua. In these countries, as the Chairwoman knows, we have supported

networks of dissidents that put pressure on the regimes. We see this in Cuba right now, and we witnessed it with the elections last year in Venezuela which should have displaced Maduro. These are not regime-change programs, but initiatives that cultivate democratic values and infrastructure, and lay the groundwork for eventual political transformation when opportunities arrive. The support is based on locally-driven aspirations and requests for help to counter tyranny. Yesterday at IRI, María Corina Machado of Venezuela, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus, and Ji Seongho – a defector from North Korea and formerly a South Korean member of parliament – all spoke about the importance of U.S. and international support to their pro-democracy work that will one day bring about democratic change in their countries.

For those who question the return on investment in supporting those who fight regimes that seem unbeatable, I would draw their attention to the case of South Africa. In the 1990s, U.S. and NED support helped those trying to end apartheid and gain universal suffrage for 17 million black South Africans. Do all of us today like what the African National Congress (ANC) has done and become? – personally, I do not. However, South Africa's system is freer and fairer than it was under an authoritarian and racist government and the country has functioning institutions.

Further to how modest U.S. support benefited American taxpayers: the end of apartheid contributed to containing the Soviet Union and enabling what is today a healthy trade relationship which creates jobs and wealth in the United States. Is that not a return on investment, and one that ultimately made the U.S. more secure and more prosperous?

I would like to now turn to China. To compete and win against the PRC, we need a multifaceted approach. While military readiness is paramount, as evidenced by the Administration's intended, increased defense budget, democracy programs are critical to countering Chinese influence in democratic governance. Countering PRC influence requires us to essentially reverse engineer the ways China exerts control by implementing cost-effective programs that deliver for the American taxpayer by training political parties to be responsive to citizens and not foreign masters; helping legislatures understand the costs of predatory loans; helping local civic actors keep politicians honest in the face of Chinese inducements; helping governments understand the risks of Huawei 5G; and helping students seeking accountable democratic rule, among other critical areas.

In Taiwan, DRL-funded initiatives have exposed the PRC's meddling in elections. In Sri Lanka, assistance from State and NED has supported civil society scrutiny of Chinese

port deals, promoting transparency. Next week, IRI will be in Ecuador, helping local organizations and journalists channel their efforts to tell Ecuadorians about the PRC's exploitative business model that robs the country's citizens. Our work in Ecuador is a NED project – it is not woke; it is what I believe most Americans would support.

Madam Chairwoman, I am not here to defend DRL, USAID, or programs from any Administration. Somewhere along the line, though – and especially during the Biden Administration – these programs moved beyond what Congress envisioned democracy programs to do overseas. In my opinion, however, throwing out democracy programs as a statecraft tool is a grave mistake.

Failing to reauthorize the Department of State, including DRL programs, the Democracy Fund, and Economic Support Fund, risks ceding ground to adversaries who exploit democratic weaknesses and undermine American interests. Eliminating the National Endowment for Democracy from our toolbox does the same.

To ensure DRL and related State Department programs deliver maximum impact, I urge the Subcommittee to reauthorize these efforts with the following priorities:

1. Enhance transparency through regular audits, public reporting, and clear metrics. The Subcommittee's oversight model should guide this, ensuring taxpayer dollars deliver and that there is no harm done to Americans at home, including by censorship programs. In maximizing transparency for the purposes of oversight, we need to do so without harming those who live in autocratic states and receive support, like partners in Iran or Venezuela.
2. Improve how U.S.-funded programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated for their impact – and shift away from models grounded in practices from the 1990s. Use AI and other advanced tools to better understand the long-term impact of democracy programs on democratic growth.
3. Design programs using an approval threshold of whether they make America more secure and more prosperous. AI tools can help with this.
4. The cause and effect of democracy programs should be clearly defined at the onset and rewarded for success. Retroactive definitions of "what was accomplished" should not substitute for hard analysis of success and failure.
5. Formalize DRL as the lead coordinating body for democracy programming, ending USAID's role to eliminate overlap.
6. Identify ways to better inform State Department senior officials of NED programs. This should include better information sharing between the NED and State on program scope, program successes, and implementation challenges. The NED

- should continue operating because, as a nimble and cost-effective entity, it administers and achieves in ways that larger State Department programs cannot.
7. Refocus DRL and Economic Support Fund programs on free elections, strong multi-party political systems, women's involvement in democracy, freedom of non-state-controlled media to operate, religious freedoms, and greater ability for civic groups and individuals to scrutinize and question government activities, just as they are doing here in the United States.
 8. Question the point of "localization": *Accomplishing things* is what we want to do, not to say, "We put X% into the hands of locals", like the goal of the last Administration.
 9. Finally, create more opportunities for competition and reward organizations for demonstrated results and prudent and accountable management of resources. Discontinue the practice of extending gigantic non-competed awards and contracts. The argument up to now is that non-competed awards save time, but AI should dramatically improve how business is done.

Madam Chairwoman, helping countries become democratic *does* make us safer at home, and *does* open economic opportunities – two outcomes that become less true if dictatorships triumph; if one-party systems like China's prevail; and if regime states like Iran and the Taliban continue to censor their people, harm women and girls, and jail political opponents.

The very institutions we promoted in Europe 40 years ago to counter the Soviets – free elections, multi-party systems, free press, free civil society – are at risk today due to well-resourced campaigns by the anti-American and authoritarian regimes in Beijing, Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang to undermine and eradicate the components of democracy that are good for the United States and bad for our adversaries. I ask that you wisely evaluate the cost of eliminating an important tool from our toolbox when you reauthorize the State Department and democracy programming.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Dr. Quirk, for your statement. I am looking forward to asking you a few questions.

Now, I recognize Mr. Malinowski for his opening statement. Thank you. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF HON. TOM MALINOWSKI

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman. I well remember the work you and I did together on these issues.

Representative Castro, it is great to be back.

One of the few things that Democrats and Republicans have long agreed on is that America should be a force for freedom and for human rights in the world. So, when freedom-loving people tore down the Berlin Wall, when a young man in China stopped a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square, when young women in Iran and Afghanistan said they wanted to be treated like human beings, not as property, when people in Venezuela rose up to demand free elections, we might have debated how to respond, but there was never any question amongst us in this room about what side America was supposed to be on.

For this reason, Congress has, for decades, passed law after law to make human rights a priority in American foreign policy—aid restrictions, sanctions, broadcasting to closed societies, the annual human rights reports, creating the National Endowment for Democracy—and it was Congress that created the Democracy and Human Rights Bureau at the State Department so that there would be an independent voice in that Department for strong human rights policies.

Why was this vital? Because the natural tendency of diplomats is to avoid friction on sensitive actions. So having a DRL Bureau ensures that, when there is tension between defending liberty and some other U.S. national interests, the Secretary of State at the very least will hear competing views.

Now, I understand the committee is interested in how we can improve and rationalize this system. Chairwoman, you said we need to go back to basics. The problem is the administration is eliminating the basics right now. How do we know that? Well, we have seen the Department submit a sworn statement in court promising to end all grants for democracy and civic society around the world—not some but all—and that derisively refer to those grants as regime change promotion, language that is straight from the Chinese and Russian propaganda playbook.

The key organizations implementing these programs—like Freedom House and the National Endowment for Democracy, NDI, IRI—have been blacklisted and publicly disparaged. Today, multiple State and AID programs backing activists in countries like China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela have been terminated despite strong congressional support.

And, Representative Castro, you are absolutely right. When the program is terminated, that is a message to those governments that we don't care about those people anymore and it is open season on those people.

This week, you all passed my dear friend Congressman Wilson's bill on democracy in Georgia. Every Republican on this subcommittee voted for it. So I assume you all don't think that is a

woke priority. The administration has terminated all democracy grants to Georgia.

And, for those democracy programs that have survived, the President's skinny budget would—looks like it would finish them off completely, as you mentioned, Representative Castro.

So, again, no more American support for people challenging authoritarian regimes from China, to Iran, to Cuba, to North Korea. No more broadcasting to closed societies through Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia, which would be a huge gift to Putin and Xi Jinping.

Meanwhile, we are seeing virtually no public statements from the Secretary of State on human rights issues with, I would say, the bizarre and disturbing exception of constant advocacy for the rights of a neo-Nazi party in Germany. The Department is paring back the annual human rights reports to the bare statutory minimum, which is a way of saying they don't want to do them at all.

Now, Madam Chairwoman, one reason I find this so bewildering is that, when I was assistant secretary for DRL, no Member of Congress was a stronger champion of our work than Senator Marco Rubio. Had I proposed any of the things that his Department is now doing to retreat from that mission and to eviscerate DRL's reporting, aid, and policy functions, he would have demanded my resignation and rightly so.

So, again, I would say the issue of the moment is not how to fix DRL. You cannot reorganize the number zero. The question is are we still going to be a country that defends human rights and freedom even when it is uncomfortable? Are we still a shining city on a hill or just a department store, as the President recently said?

So, if you care about this cause, even if you have disagreements about how best to advance it, now is the time. Don't wait for the authorization bill. Now is the time to insist that the State Department stay in the fight. Even if some of our top officials don't believe in any of this, Congress can preserve the institutions and programs that you believe in. I would be delighted to speak to you in more detail about how you can do that. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Malinowski follows:]

**Statement of Tom Malinowski
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
May 8, 2025**

Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, thank you for having me back today.

Before getting to the urgent matters at hand, I want to make sure we remember why this topic matters. For decades now, one of the few issues Democrats and Republicans have agreed on is that the United States of America is not just a bunch of people defending a piece of land; it is a nation defined by ideals of freedom and human rights that we defend at home and advance throughout the world.

When crowds of freedom loving people breached the Berlin Wall in 1989, when a brave young man in China stopped a column of tanks sent to kill pro-democracy protestors, when young women in Iran and Afghanistan said they wanted to be treated like human beings not property, when people in Venezuela rose up to demand the right to choose their leaders in free and fair elections, we might have debated what policies to pursue to help them. But there was never any question among us in this room that America was supposed to be on their side.

We understood that supporting human rights and freedom is the right thing to do. And we learned that standing for principles that are universally attractive in the world confers on the United States an enormous comparative advantage over our cynical and nihilistic authoritarian adversaries — an advantage we would have to be crazy to surrender.

For this reason, Congress has for decades passed law after law to make human rights a priority in American foreign policy. Congress restricted arms sales and military aid to abusive governments. It empowered presidents to impose sanctions on foreign officials responsible for human rights abuses and corruption — you and I teamed up on a lot of those bills when I was in the House Madam Chairwoman. Congress required the State Department to issue annual reports on human rights in every country in the world, so that our government would at least speak honestly about how their people are treated, even if our diplomats wanted to be chummy with their leaders. It created a family of broadcasting organizations like Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia to penetrate closed societies with uncensored news. It appropriated funds to monitor elections, investigate atrocities, and support human rights and democracy activists challenging authoritarian regimes, and created institutions like the National Endowment for Democracy to manage them. Congress actually increased that funding several times over during the last Trump administration. It also adopted multiple bills to advance democracy in specific countries — just this week, for example, you all passed my dear friend Congressman Wilson’s legislation in support of democracy in Georgia.

It was also Congress that created the democracy and human rights bureau at the State Department (or DRL), as well as offices to defend religious freedom and to fight human

trafficking. Congress created DRL for two main reasons — number one, to ensure that the laws it had passed would be implemented and that the funds it appropriated would be effectively spent — in that sense, when I ran the bureau I felt that I reported to Congress as to the president and the Secretary of State. And number two, so there would be an independent voice for strong democracy and human rights policies inside the State Department. This was vital because the natural tendency of diplomats responsible for managing our day to day relationships with foreign governments is to avoid friction on sensitive issues like human rights. Having a DRL bureau ensures that when there is tension between defending liberty and some other U.S national interest, the Secretary of State will at least hear competing views from officials of equivalent stature and rank, and can make a fully informed decision.

I understand that the Committee is interested in how this system for promoting human rights and freedom, which the Congress created and the State Department implements, can be improved. Do we have the right priorities? Could there be a better organizational structure? Those are perfectly fair questions. But the most important point I want to make to you today is that those are not the most pressing questions for today. The question for right now is whether this mission of our government will survive at all. For even as we speak, the administration is racing to eliminate it.

We've seen the State Department submit a sworn statement in court promising to end all grants supporting what it referred to as "regime change, civic society, and democracy promotion" — not some, but all — and please note here the Department's use of the phrase "regime change," which is normally how dictatorships like China and Russia slander America's support for human rights around the world, not how we talk about ourselves.

And in fact, the Department has followed through on that pledge. The work it was doing to champion democracy and anti-corruption in Russia — all that is finished. Key programs backing activists in countries like China, Iran, and Venezuela, and countering Chinese influence in Africa, have been terminated. I mentioned Congressman Wilson's Georgia democracy bill earlier, and noticed that every Republican member of this subcommittee voted for it, so I assume you all don't think that's a "woke" priority. Yet the State Department has canceled all of the support for Georgian civic groups that your legislation calls for.

A vital program of small emergency grants that DRL used to help activists at immediate risk of being arrested or killed get to safety has been ended. Election observation missions have been defunded. The key organizations that implemented these American programs, like Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute, have been blacklisted and publicly disparaged (even though Secretary of State Rubio was himself on the board of the International Republican Institute).

And while some democracy programs have survived a first round of review, the president's FY '26 budget proposal looks like it would finish them off completely as part of an 83% cut to foreign assistance — again, to be clear, that would mean no more American support for people challenging authoritarian regimes from China to Iran to Cuba to North Korea.

The administration is also trying to defund the broadcasting agencies delivering uncensored news to people living in dictatorships — despite the bipartisan support they enjoy in Congress. This would be a huge gift to Putin, to Xi Jinping, and to all of our authoritarian adversaries.

We're seeing few if any public statements from Secretary Rubio or the Department for political prisoners, for freedom of expression, or for free elections anywhere in the world — the main exception seem to be relentless advocacy for the neo-Nazi party in Germany and for Afrikaners in South Africa, which communicates a disturbing message of its own.

The State Department has said it is narrowing the focus of its annual human rights reports to the bare minimum required by law, which is a way of saying they'd rather not do them at all — and it's subjecting chapters on dictatorships with which President Trump has wanted to improve relations to unprecedented political scrutiny.

On top of that, Secretary Rubio has said he wants to move all the DRL staff whose job is to influence our policies towards authoritarian countries into the Department's regional bureaus, where their voices will be muted, and which raises the question of what DRL would have left to do, if stripped of its funding and its policy functions.

Madam chairwoman, one reason I find all this so bewildering is that when I was Assistant Secretary for DRL, no member of Congress was more interested in our work than Senator Marco Rubio, because he was genuinely and passionately committed to the cause of freedom everywhere. Had I proposed any of the things his Department is now doing to retreat from that mission, and to eviscerate DRL's human rights and democracy reporting, assistance, and policy functions, he would have demanded my resignation, and rightly so. Yet here we are.

So, again, I would say that the issue of the moment is not how to fix DRL. You can't reorganize the number zero. There has to be something still there to fix for that discussion to be meaningful.

It's essential now for members of Congress of both parties who care about defending human rights and freedom in the world — even if you have disagreements about how best to do it — to insist that the State Department stay in the fight. You can't make administration officials believe in something they clearly don't care about. But you can preserve the institutions and programs that you believe in and that continue to serve America well.

There are things you can do in an authorization bill, such as protecting DRL's policy responsibilities, the staff and authority it needs to implement laws adopted by Congress, and the integrity of the annual human rights reports.

There's more you can do through appropriations — to maintain support for the activists fighting oppression and corruption in dictatorships around the world, and for international broadcasting, though direct allocations to the entities doing the work if the State Department continues to express disinterest in supporting it.

But since authorization and appropriations bills take time, we also need your voices to be raised now against what can only be called an attempt to end America's bipartisan tradition of defending human rights and freedom in the world. Speak out now, before it's too late. And then we can have a healthy debate about how to do the work better.

Ms. SALAZAR. Yes. Thanks to you, Mr. Malinowski, Congressman. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

It is fascinating, everything I hear from three of you. We all agree, I think, that we want to continue being the shining city on the hill, that we are the only game in town because the Russians and the Iranians and the Chinese are really not going to promote anything close to democracy or freedom.

So I am going to go start with you, Mr. Destro. And I think that your statement was highly enlightening. So, when you say that we have got to ask ourselves hard questions, that the title of the hearing is not necessarily what we need to be looking at—we agree that we want some return on our investment, that we want to promote democracy. That is what we are here for. And it is a little bit disturbing to hear that we have not—we have spent so much and the return has been so little.

So just give me an example of in the last—let's say in the last 4 years or in the last 10 years, what have we done wrong? What did we do wrong in the last 4 years with Biden? I am sure that there were some moneys going to good programs, but, you know, perception is reality, and when we hear that there is going to \$12 million for the Guatemalans—for the native Guatemalans to have a sex-change operation, you know, that doesn't really sound really good.

So what did we do wrong in the last 4 years, and what did we do wrong in the last 10 years? Put it into perspective for us, please.

Mr. DESTRO. Well, with respect, I think that is a bit of the wrong question. I think the question is what are we doing right.

Ms. SALAZAR. Okay. So then tell me which one is the right question.

Mr. DESTRO. It is what are we doing right.

Ms. SALAZAR. What are we doing right?

Mr. DESTRO. Yes. What are we doing right?

Ms. SALAZAR. Okay.

Mr. DESTRO. Okay? And, you know, Congressman Malinowski and I talked about this when I was in office, and this question of—as the DRL assistant secretary, you have 1.5 billion tools at your disposal in the ESF and in Human Rights Fund. You also have \$40 billion worth of really committed professional people working with you on those projects. And so the question becomes where is the best place to put them.

Now, all of those places that you just talked about—the sex-change operations, everything else—that is not the best way to put them. It doesn't really advance our foreign policy.

Ms. SALAZAR. Correct. So you agree that we need to change that vision—

Mr. DESTRO. I do.

Ms. SALAZAR [continuing]. and leave wokeness and go back to democracy?

Mr. DESTRO. I think we need to foster freedom, right?

Ms. SALAZAR. Right.

Mr. DESTRO. And that is why I used Belize as the example. Here is a great small country who—they are trying to figure out should we keep the king? Should we stay in the Caribbean Court of Jus-

tice? Should we revise our Constitution, you know, and where is our embassy? Nowhere.

Ms. SALAZAR. Right. So——

Mr. DESTRO. Where is Millennium Challenge? Pushing that same agenda you just talked about.

Ms. SALAZAR. So this reorganization of the State Department that you just mentioned under Marco Rubio now—so, if you were his advisor, what are the three things that you would tell him in order to have our return on investment to be really high? Three.

Mr. DESTRO. Well, I think the first thing I would do is make sure—and this is one of the things that I tried to do as assistant secretary, is to make sure that the assistant secretary who has statutory authority to maintain constant oversight of that funding, both humanitarian and——

Ms. SALAZAR. Oversight?

Mr. DESTRO. Yes, oversight. Right.

Ms. SALAZAR. No. 2?

Mr. DESTRO. We don't. And I know it is fair to say, well, what do you mean you don't? You know, I had to spend a million dollars to put together a data base to pull it all together.

Ms. SALAZAR. So oversight of where the money is going. That is No. 2?

Mr. DESTRO. Oversight of where the money is going, who is spending it, and it doesn't matter whether it is in State or HHS because there is human rights and humanitarian funding all over the government. And so the first thing would be let's figure out where the money is going.

Ms. SALAZAR. All right. So you are telling me that we do not know as a government where the money is going?

Mr. DESTRO. No, we don't.

Ms. SALAZAR. We are only spending taxpayers' money, all right? So——

Mr. DESTRO. Right. But that is your power of the purse. If you don't know, then you don't have any effective oversight.

Ms. SALAZAR. You mean Congress—I am sorry—or the State Department officials?

Mr. DESTRO. I am talking about—this is a dual, joint executive Congress thing. You have the power of the purse, and you have the right to see how the money is being spent, and you are not getting it. That is my point.

Ms. SALAZAR. And then that would be the most important advice you would give to the Secretary of State?

Mr. DESTRO. Is make sure that there is at least one person, if not more who has continuous oversight and can demand oversight of that money. And I can tell you stories. I won't bother to burn the record now, but I basically faced absolute insubordination when I tried to get that. And assistant secretaries really don't have the authority to take personnel actions like that. You know, but the fact of the matter is that I was told I didn't have any right to see the money.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you. I don't want to overextend my time.

So I now recognize Ranking Member Castro for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

I know in your testimony just now and I think in your written testimony you stated that you are often unaware of what programs the Department funded or operated, and that suggests unaccountability.

And, Tom, you served in the same role in the Obama administration, I believe, and I wanted to ask you, you know, is it accurate that, as assistant secretary, you had to sign off on all the funding recommendations?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Absolutely, yes. I find this very strange. I signed off on every single grant program and reviewed every single grant program. If I had questions, they were answered. If I had concerns, they were addressed. Congress was briefed on every grant program at that point that it wanted to know about. It was briefed on grant programs it didn't want to know about. That wasn't the issue.

And DRL—one of the hallmarks of what makes it so good is that it actually has an office of people who are dedicated to grant management. These are very small grants going to small organizations, often in developing countries, and so the oversight function of DRL is especially important and one reason it needs to be empowered and not dismantled, as the Secretary of State is intending to do.

I understand you all have been briefed that the people overseeing these grants are either going to be fired or moved into the regional bureaus, which I think former Assistant Secretary Destro and I agree would be a bad idea. So there is oversight, DRL is key to it, and that is why it needs to be strengthened.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. And, by the way, there will be nothing to oversee if everything is cut.

Mr. CASTRO. Right.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. So we are kind of rearranging the deck chairs of the Titanic here unless we focus on the fact that everything is being eliminated.

Mr. CASTRO. I mean, to your point—and that is why I said this is not reform. This is sabotage. This is a total dismantling of the infrastructure for diplomacy for the United States.

Let me ask you: The administration's skinny budget proposes cutting all funding to the National Endowment for Democracy, or NED, making claims about a lack of transparency and disinformation.

Dr. Quirk, are you aware of the claims made about the NED? Did the administration reach out to the NED or its grantees to seek information before making these claims?

Mr. QUIRK. Thank you, Ranking Member Castro, for the question. I appreciate it.

The charges against the NED from OMB in the skinny budget were, frankly, news to me. I am not here to defend the NED. I do know they responded with a fact sheet, which I have here. I am happy to submit it for the record. What I will say is that individuals making similar accusations never at least knock on our door and say, hey, we have a concern to an X, Y, or Z program. Can we discuss it?

Often, the charters aren't backed up with any evidence. There is no followup. The NED are audited. They report to Congress and

the USG, frankly, quite frequently. So the bit about them not being transparent just baffles me.

Mr. CASTRO. And the administration's cuts to democracy and human rights programs was far-reaching and included significant cuts to the International Republican Institute's programs. Can you speak to how these cuts were made? And did the administration seek information from you all specifically before making these decisions, and did you feel like it was a thoughtful and deliberative process?

Mr. QUIRK. So what I will say about the foreign aid review is we—any administration has the right to do it. We supported it from day one. Certainly, there were some programs cut that, in my view, were not sufficiently linked to advancing U.S. national security. That said, there were many that were cut that were, in fact, advancing U.S. interests. Tell me how it is not in our interest to be supportive of the people in Cuba, Iran, China, elsewhere.

To your question, Ranking Member, about did the State Department reach out for information, the former F director of the State Department whose name now escapes me—his office never came to us asking for that information.

Mr. CASTRO. You know, we spent years talking about the threats of China both to the United States, to our allies, but also to their own people, nations like Cuba. And I actually agree with you on Cuba, although I would say that we have, for some time now, pursued a strategy that failed a long time ago, and we should have made the change sometime back.

But let me ask: Does anybody agree that cutting the diplomacy budget by 85 percent—85 percent—is actually going to make the United States safer and stronger and more secure around the world?

Mr. DESTRO. Well, Mr. Castro, if I can respond.

Mr. CASTRO. Please.

Mr. DESTRO. There is nothing like a hanging to clarify the mind. I mean, you know, I am sure that is a negotiable figure. You know, and that is—

Mr. CASTRO. Well, let's say it ends up at 50 percent. Do you think it is good at 50 percent?

Mr. DESTRO. I can't answer that question, and the reason is it is what you are spending the money on. It seems to me when we talk about things like countering China—

Mr. CASTRO. Well, but China is increasing its funding, right? It is not decreasing its funding.

Mr. DESTRO. Of course. But the question is how do you counter China. And one of the ways you do that is by increasing the independence of the countries that you are working with. Some of that is going to be trade policy. Some of it is going to be human rights funding.

I have spent a lot of time working with people in West Africa about how do we use trade funding to do human rights. I mean, these are not incompatible. In fact, our programs here at the United States—human rights in the workplace is one of our most stellar human rights achievements in the last century.

Mr. CASTRO. But they cut all the labor rights programs. I mean, I think what you are describing is a situation, also, where the

countries are not likely—I mean, it could be possible—but aren’t likely to become stronger and more independent on their own. They are more likely to rely on some other Nation like China or Russia, which is I think what is going to happen.

Mr. DESTRO. Well, you know, again, I don’t disagree. I don’t think we disagree about the importance of it. But a good friend who is from a South Asian country—one that will remain nameless—has come here to study. Her Secret Service came to her and said, you know, you are working through the CIA. And then she says, well, are you telling me I shouldn’t come? To which they said, no, no, no, no. We just want you to know where the money is coming from.

That is the perception. If that is the perception, it is not a big surprise why a country like India enacts something like our Foreign Agents Registration Act. So, I mean, actions have consequences. It is the how. Diplomacy is about how. It is not about whether.

Mr. CASTRO. I have gone over my time; so we will have to continue the conversation another time.

Thank you, Chairwoman.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Now, I recognize the representative, Sara Jacobs, from the State of California.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you, Ms. Chairwoman.

And thank you all for testifying.

Look, I am glad that we all seem to agree that human rights and democracy are an important part of our national security and foreign policy. I know there are some on this committee who maybe think they aren’t, like our Chairman Mast, but I believe that it is actually in our national interest to prioritize and center human rights and good governance in our foreign policy because it is in our long-term interest to do so, right?

Like, let’s take the African continent, the youngest population in the world. Seventy percent of the population is under 30. These young people are the future. Do we want them to remember the U.S. supporting their autocratic regimes or supporting populations who need protection and support to fight for a better future?

Obviously, we can have that policy discussion, but what we are talking about now is the grave mistake I think this administration is taking to sideline human rights, democracy, and governance at the State Department.

And, Madam Chairwoman, I first of all don’t believe any of the programs that you cited are actually DRL programs, but, also—look, you can cherry-pick a random grant or a program here or there and frame them as something that is silly. That is fine, actually. I am actually fine if you disagree with some of the programs that the Biden administration put in place. They were aligned with Biden’s foreign policy priorities, which included supporting human rights, including LGBTQ+ rights.

It is totally normal for a new administration to come in and decide that they have different priorities and to terminate those programs that they don’t think align with their policy priorities, but that is not what this administration has done. It has actually canceled nearly all human rights programs, including human rights

programs that we are working on fighting for freedom in China and Venezuela and Nigeria, and it is gutting the expertise in the Department around human rights.

So, first, Dr. Quirk, I want to dig into a little bit more the impact of this administration's gutting of democracy programs. Approximately how many of your programs were terminated by this administration?

Mr. QUIRK. At the start of the administration, we had roughly—from State and AID—95 active awards, and all but a handful have been terminated.

Ms. JACOBS. And the administration has assured us that this review was being done in a systematic way, that they were focused on waste, fraud, and abuse, that they are just doing due diligence. Did any of those terminations include a rationale for why the program was canceled?

Mr. QUIRK. No.

Ms. JACOBS. Would you consider any of those programs woke?

Mr. QUIRK. I would not. Look, anyone implementing democracy and rights programs over the last 10 years could be accused of doing woke programming insofar as a work plan or proposal had to include those words based on that administration's foreign policy. So did IRI documents include those terms? Yes. Did we do any woke programming? Decidedly, no.

Ms. JACOBS. Were there any allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse in any of your programs?

Mr. QUIRK. Not that I am aware of.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I think it is clear that this review was not thoughtful or thorough and that it was never actually about waste, fraud, abuse, or efficiency.

I also want to get to another thing my colleagues like to say. They like to say we shouldn't be doing programs that other governments don't want us to do because that hurts our diplomacy.

Dr. Quirk, a concrete example. The U.S. previously provided significant support to the Syrian civil society under the Assad regime. Would you agree there was bipartisan support for these programs?

Mr. QUIRK. I support providing democracy assistance in closed societies because long-standing autocratic regimes—whether it is Cuba, Iran—are stable until they are not, and providing support in these countries is about maintaining the small amount of civic space and ensuring that there are leaders in place that have the skills to lead when that regime falls.

Ms. JACOBS. I think that is exactly right. So, clearly, the Assad regime did not like what the U.S. was funding, but it was in our interest to fund it anyway, and that is true in many, many of these countries.

So, with my last minute, Congressman Malinowski, could you talk about why supporting civil society and promoting good governance in other countries is so critical to our strategic U.S. foreign policy and national security?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, thank you. In addition to being obviously the right thing to do, I think the most important argument for it is that this is our comparative advantage over adversaries like China. It is what makes America special. We are not just a bunch of people defending a piece of soil. We stand for something larger

in the world that is attractive, that people are inspired by all over the world. Why would we give that up?

Mr. Destro compared what is happening—maybe inadvertently—to a hanging. Yes, that is true. We tied our own noose, we put our neck in it, and we are about to hang ourselves, even as China and all of our adversaries are increasing funding for their influence operations around the world. That would be catastrophic for U.S. national interests. Thank you.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Representative Jacobs.

And, now, we recognize Representative Mike Lawler from the State of New York for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you may know, I currently cochair the Moldova Caucus and have since I joined Congress. A place like Moldova really exemplifies how some good governance and anticorruption assistance can actually go a long way.

Can you discuss some of the impactful programming that the U.S. has supported in Moldova in the last decade? I will ask any of you for—to opine.

Mr. DESTRO. I think I am going to defer to Dr. Quirk on that one because I don't have the details on Moldova.

Mr. QUIRK. What I can say, broadly speaking, the support we provide in countries like Moldova is to support the infrastructure of democracy—strong political parties, civil society, legislatures—so that they can rule their own country and govern in a way that makes the country stable.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I mean, one more specific example that—as you know, there was an extremely important election in Moldova last year that Putin tried to undermine in every way that he could. That election was observed, as I recall, by NDI and IRI observers on the ground, all funded 100 percent by the U.S. Government. If there were an election in Moldova today of equal importance, we could not deploy a single person because all of that money is frozen.

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Quirk, to that end, can you share from your perspective how election monitoring is actually helpful, and are there ways to make these trips and verifications more effective?

Mr. QUIRK. Happy to. IRI, along with our NDI colleagues, have provided election observation services for hundreds of elections. These efforts provide an independent check from pre-election, Election Day, post-election, to ensure that the processes are free, fair, transparent, absent of which a ruling or opposition party might be inclined to conduct fraud.

And, moreover, following the election process, the reports indicate areas in which the country should improve their electoral processes so it is even better the next time around.

Mr. LAWLER. Transnational repression—obviously, when governments reach across borders to harass and silence dissidents—has become a significant human rights concern in recent years. Repressive regimes abuse Interpol Red Notices and use overseas law enforcement offices in an effort to control citizens living abroad. NGO's report that there have been over 1,000 cases in the last dec-

ade perpetuated by over 44 countries, with the most common perpetrators being China, Russia, Turkiye, and Egypt.

What transnational activities by authoritarian governments are most concerning from a human rights perspective, and how could the State Department respond to that?

Mr. DESTRO. Mr. Lawler, can I address that?

Mr. LAWLER. Sure.

Mr. DESTRO. I mean, I will give you a really good example. Overseas Chinese police stations, right? And they exist here.

Mr. LAWLER. We have had them in New York.

Mr. DESTRO. That is what I mean. They have them in Minneapolis-St. Paul. So, when countries transcend their borders—and it is not just countries, I might add. Transnational organized criminal groups like Boko Haram, you know, the various gangs that control our border—you know, those are all very concerning.

And so the question becomes what is the best diplomatic response, you know, and then how do you back that up with some serious money? I mean, that is the—nobody is arguing here that we shouldn't do this. In fact, having helped run a statewide election in my home State of Ohio, I know exactly how elections get run. I know the machines. I know the counting. I know all of the things.

By the time you get to election observers—I think election observers are great, you know, but many boards of elections in this country get nervous when we bring in observers. That is our problem. You know, what we need to do is bring in election officials and watch how the election actually happens. You know, and that is not just observing. It is a long process over a couple of years.

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Malinowski?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Yes. So it is most disturbing when it happens on our soil, obviously. It is the countries you mentioned. I would say Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Khashoggi, and a number of other countries. When I was in Congress, this was a priority, pushing the State Department to do more about this.

One success we had was that they started including examples of transnational repression in the annual human rights reports on every country in the world. Those are important because it is the one time in the year when the State Department is forced to be honest about everybody, whether it is comfortable or not. And I am afraid the news we have gotten is that the administration has decided to take out from the annual human rights reports that section on transnational repression. So I would encourage you to take that up with them before that decision is final. Thank you.

Mr. LAWLER. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Representative Lawler.

Now, we recognize for 5 minutes Representative Jackson from Illinois.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, Chairwoman.

Thank you, Ranking Member.

Thank you, distinguished panelists.

We are here today to discuss an American agenda for democracy and human rights. I believe we can all agree on the importance of freedom, democracy, and human rights as pillars of a stable and a just world.

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has historically championed these universal values. Its mission to bolster democratic institutions, confront democratic backsliding, promote accountability, uphold labor standards, and advance the rights of marginalized communities globally reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be as a Nation, a Nation that cherishes democratic values, embraces diversity, and strives to promote peace. These are not woke values. It seems like one fool said “woke” is a bad word to have a sense of consciousness, and a lot of other people sitting on the vine have echoed it.

Many people are saying what is “woke.” I would like to know from you, Mr. Quirk, is there a definition that has been published on what is the definition of “woke”?

Mr. QUIRK. I am by no means an expert nor do I desire to be on wokeism. I am not aware of any particular definition that is published.

Mr. JACKSON. Okay. Thank you. You don’t know. So it is kind of what this administration is doing.

Mr. Bill Gates, who has done a lot of great things in philanthropy, has called Elon Musk just today and his DOGE companions “geographically illiterate.” They may have some level of intelligence, but they can be really foolhardy and unintelligent in so many other ways.

Let us consider the global landscape at this time, from the devastating conflicts in the Sudan, to the ongoing war in Ukraine against Russian aggression, the heart-wrenching violence in Israel and Palestine, the dire human rights that is happening off of our shores right here in Haiti. We talk about the struggle for democracy in Myanmar, the escalating instability in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sahel. Nearly every continent is touched by conflicts and democratic backsliding when we retreat.

This will be for you, Hon. Malinowski. At this very moment when the world is rife with instability that directly impacts Americans’ national security interests, is it wise for us to diminish these very tools designed to address these challenges?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Certainly not. And, you know, one thing that I heard a lot from President Trump during the campaign is that he wants fewer wars in the world. He doesn’t want the United States fighting as many wars in the world.

A budget that cuts the State Department by 83 percent leaves us—and I am a proponent of strong military spending. I would have voted for any increase in the military budget when I was here. But to cut the State Department by 83 percent means that, when there is a crisis in the world, the only tool we have is a gun. The only tool we have is the one that President Trump claims he doesn’t want to use, and that makes absolutely no sense to me.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you so much.

Mr. Destro, there is the comments of woke. This administration uses these terms, and then they run and people don’t seem to ask the second or the third question. This administration also talks about America being first. How are we being first? What are our interests in this hemisphere? What are our goals to become first in what?

Mr. DESTRO. Well, thank you, Mr. Jackson. That is a really good question. And I would say that—and I have to give credit to my wife on this one—that putting America first is exactly what the flight attendant tells you when you get on an airplane. Put your own face mask on first, and then help the people around you. And that is really, I think—and I agree with my co-panelists that our obligation is to help all the people around us, you know. And why? That is good for us.

And so when Mr. Castro mentioned earlier labor programs—I mean, I started out as a labor lawyer. I had no idea how much of my portfolio was dealing with human rights in the labor field, supply chains. You know, people mention Democratic Republic of Congo. I mean, but how do you solve the problem of kids being slaves in cobalt mines? I mean, that is not just a human rights problem. We have got to find American companies who will go in and run those mines and apply good, you know, labor standards. So this question of how much do we spend, it is not just a question of how much. It is how do we put it together.

I mean, I will give you an example. My friend and colleague, former Assistant Secretary Dave Stilwell, who ran the East Asia-Pacific Bureau—he and I were talking about how do you help countries that are under pressure from China to maintain their independence. And one of the answers was you translate the master agreement that the Chinese make you sign, but it is in Chinese. You don't even know what you are agreeing to. That is not independence. That is not freedom. You know, but where does it fit? Where does the funding—what is the pot out of which you take that money?

Those are the practical problems that assistant secretaries have to solve every single day. And it is not just me. It is my counterparts in Labor, my counterparts in USTR. I mean, all this thing has to be put together as a little symphony, and it is the Secretary and the President who has to conduct it.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you so much for your participation. I thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

And I would encourage all of you to keep on doing the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. And for those who use some inflammatory terms and try to make woke and consciousness a bad word, push back on that ignorance with all your might.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Representative—

Mr. JACKSON. Preserve your integrity.

I yield back.

Ms. SALAZAR [continuing]. from the State of Illinois. Thank you.

Now I recognize for 5 minutes the Representative Titus from the State of Nevada.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And thank you to Mr. Jackson for bringing up about woke. I have got to just first take exception to the name of this hearing. We want to not promote woke values. I don't even know what that means, and I have never heard a very good definition from the other side.

And if you look at democracy and spreading freedom, which is the other half of the title here, we are talking about freedom of the press, programs that promote this, protecting reporters. You are

talking about helping women run for office, talking about helping legislatures draft bills on anticorruption. Is that woke? Does that qualify for woke?

That sounds to me like we are spreading freedom and democracy. So I don't get where that title comes from. And when we are doing away with the programs that promote that, like IRI and NDI, we are not spreading democracy.

Mr. Malinowski, it is nice to see you here, as a former colleague, to talk about these issues. You know, every time you strike one of these issues, look what we have done in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, Hong Kong, Tibet, Burma, all kinds of democracy programs.

And then the latest is now we are going to change Voice of America to what is this super-right wing, One America News Network. That sounds pretty woke to me or pretty asleep. I don't know which it is.

But, anyway, I know the good work that IRI and NDI do.

I would ask you, Dr. Quirk, I have seen it through my visiting countries with the House Democracy Partnership, on the ground helping to build democracies, and that is what the Partnership promotes.

So would you just talk about how the phrase has affected some specific work that you have been involved in. What are some of the specific programs that you have that do promote democracy that the other side is cheering for us eliminating?

Mr. QUIRK. Thank you, Congresswoman, for the question. I am not here necessarily to talk about the programs that IRI has had canceled. What I will say is that yesterday we had at IRI foreign events, three courageous opposition leaders, Maria Corina Machado from Venezuela, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya from Belarus, and others.

You don't need to hear it from me, hear it from them. They quite forcefully said, we need the U.S. in this game. We don't need the U.S. to be leaning back when the likes of China and Russia are leaning in.

Ms. TITUS. Well, I think that is absolutely true, because they will be only too willing to step into the breach if we are not present.

And when you pull out all the people who are in the field working with villages, working with remote areas, working with new legislatures, what is left there?

I mean, this is such a source of soft power for us, as you were saying, that just help the person with his face mask on, it helps everybody around us, that I just find this astounding when I look at the cuts that are being made.

Mr. Malinowski, would you continue this conversation with me about what we are losing and talk about the State Department's reorganization and how that is going to impact the regional approach to things?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, we are losing our heart and soul. That is the headline. Specifically, you asked about programs. It would take me hours but, you know, we are losing grants. We were talking about Cuba. There is a wonderful organization called Diario de coup De Cuba, which has been exposing corruption by the Cuban regime for years. Defunded.

There is an organization called China Human Rights Monitor which—China Dissent Monitor, which is the main—the best source of information in the world about local protests against the Chinese Communist Party. Even the Chinese people learn about protests in their own country through this. 100 percent defunded.

All of the work we have been doing to try to help women and girls in Afghanistan who we abandoned, that the State Department, USAID, DRL continued to help them, through women's shelters, through emergency grants to get them out of the country. All of that has been defunded.

And you mention the other side. I know that Representative Salazar, Chairwoman Salazar, you don't want to defund those programs. I know that Representative Smith, who has been championing this work longer than anybody in this room, does not want to defund these programs.

And so very, very seriously, as a former colleague, I need to appeal to you guys to stand up against this. This is a President of your party. And if you do that successfully, I still expect and understand that there will be conservative priorities imposed on these programs, because it is a Republican administration, and that is fine. I want them to survive, and they are not going to survive unless Republicans in the House and the Senate stand up and say they need to survive.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Representative Titus.

Now I recognize for 5 minutes Representative Chris Smith from the State of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much, Chairwoman.

And welcome to our distinguished panel. Tom, it is great to see you again. And, of course, Bob Destro, who I have known for decades as well. And welcome to you, Dr. Quirk.

Just a couple of questions. I know you were speaking about, Secretary Destro, about the DR Congo. I just had like my sixth hearing on it earlier on March 25th, just a few weeks ago.

And we focused again on the issue of cobalt, the fact that I have been to North Kivu. I have been to Goma. And we do know that, unfortunately, kids are being used to mine in the artisanal mines, but also about 25 to 40 thousand kids and about 200,000 adults are in forced labor.

I have appealed repeatedly to the DRC Government to sever their ties with the Chinese Communist Party. We know that there are moneys flowing that are ubiquitous to help facilitate this terrible exploitation. And, you know, wherever you come down on EV cars and the need for cobalt, make sure it is coming from a supply chain that is clean of this kind of horrific abuse.

I do have a bill in, H.R. 2310, which we are going to try to get passed that would provide a rebuttable presumption, because it is all coming from China. It is all coming from Xinjiang, where they process it, process it there or in a good country where there is real ILO type labor standards. And, as you indicated, you know, American mines, you know, are more likely to have a much better track record.

You testified at several of my hearings, and I thank you for that. And so I just want to underscore the need to get these kinds of bills passed and out of the Senate.

Last night, 406 to 1, both sides of the aisle voting for it, my Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act passed again. It passed 2 years ago, died in the Senate. And it is very serious.

I mean, the sanctioning not just of Chinese officials but also of anyone who is complicit in it, you know, whether it be the brokers working out of New Jersey or New York or anywhere else to procure livers and any other thing, go to Shanghai, get it. In 2 weeks, you got the liver. It is coming from a Uyghur or it is coming from a Falun Gong practitioner, as we know.

And the numbers are staggering. The high number is 100,000 murders per year to get these. I had one doctor who did them. And you testified at that hearing, Bob. I will never forget it. And you said, you know, this is a human rights and also a trafficking issue almost without parallel, and we need—this bill I think would stop a lot of it—it never stops it all—and it applies to the world.

So we got to make sure the TIP Office remains strong and intact. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. I authored that law. It took 3 years to get that passed. There was all kinds of opposition to it.

The Assistant Secretary at the time testified. And they didn't want it at the Clinton administration but, thank God, at the end of the day he signed it. So all's well that ends well.

And then we had problems implementing it through various administrations, including Republican and Democratic, to be faithful to stand with the victims. Don't be indifferent or enabling of the oppressor.

So that TIP Office, we got to make sure that any reorg protects the TIP Office robustly, the Ambassador-at-large. Ditto for the Religious Freedom Office, which was Frank Wolf's 1998 law.

So maybe if you wanted to speak to that because I think, you know, if we are not speaking out on human rights issues, who will? I mean, we do get some good work from the U.K. and some of the other democracies, but we have got to be the leader.

So Mr. Destro and then Tom, if you want to speak.

Mr. DESTRO. Well, let me start by saying amen. I mean, what you just said is exactly right. And if we want to take the—you know, let me give you the example. Come back to the idea of the cobalt mines.

I mean, one of the most fascinating meetings I had as Assistant Secretary was a group of people who represented the footwear and apparel industry. And basically, you had State Department, Justice, Labor, Customs Enforcement, everybody in the same room saying, if we find slave labor goods in your supply chain, they are not coming in, period.

And, by the way, if we find out that you know they are coming in, you are going to go to jail. That is effective foreign policy, I mean. And it is the coordination piece that I think often gets missed in all of this.

I have been called by people in Africa to say, will you help us find some American companies that will mine this stuff for us in DRC. That is not an easy task. You know, they don't even know

who to go to. And so part of it is you almost need—on human rights, you almost need—I hate to put it this way—a human rights concierge.

I mean, what is happening with organ harvesting, I had no idea how bad it was. And, as you know, we actually found the first survivor of an actual organ harvesting and the Chinese admitted it, you know. And there are organ brokers.

So there is lots of work and lots of I think potential money to spend, but we just have to get our act together and do it effectively.

Mr. QUIRK. If I could just add quickly, there are many potential positive components of the proposed reorg, and one mistake, given how critical the work of the TIP Office is, moving it under PRM. It deemphasizes the nature of the work.

Mr. DESTRO. And actually, if it is going to go anywhere, it should go under organized crime, not under population, not under migration.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you, Representative Smith. You are going to be able to have more time to ask other questions. We are going to go into a second round of questions, and I just have a couple for all of you.

Let's talk about Venezuela. You mentioned Venezuela. You mentioned Mexico. Let's just go Venezuela. Yesterday, five members of the Maria Corina Machado team were rescued. They were able to escape the country in a special operation.

So the question is, and it is for three of you, what else do you think DRL could do in order to push for democracy in Venezuela? We have such a difficult situation. Maria Corina, in my understanding, is the new Simon Bolivar of this generation. She is in the country. Maduro signed the Biden Accords, promising that he was going to leave if he lost the election, he was going to stay if he won it. We understand that she has produced the tallies that he lost by 70 points.

What else can we do as a country to help the freedom forces and the democracy to go back to Venezuela? Start with right there. Yes.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. So a couple things. First of all, I saw that news. It sounds great. I applaud Secretary Rubio for what I assume was a lot of work that he did behind the scenes to make that happen.

But, OK, we rescued five people from Venezuela and brought them to the United States. And we are threatening to deport 300,000 people right back to the Maduro regime?

Ms. SALAZAR. I understand, but—

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Right? I mean, I am sorry. I can't help raising that difficult issue, but we are—

Ms. SALAZAR. We understand what is happening, but if we were as a country, we need to—what do you think we should do? What are the forces we need to? What are the resources we need?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Don't be making deals with dictators to take back people who are their opponents. That is core. You cannot claim to be for democracy and human rights in a country if you are doing that.

No. 2, don't take away DRL's tools and funding, because—and to be fair, not all of the Venezuela democracy programs have been frozen or terminated, but everything running through the NED,

through Freedom House, through that whole family has been terminated.

That is absolutely crazy. And my understanding is because they just don't like Freedom House. Like, really? That is your reason?

Ms. SALAZAR. Programs that have not—so putting aside the ones who have been terminated or the ones that are still current, what else can we do as a country?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. We can resume the things that have been terminated. It shouldn't be unreasonable for me—I mean, look, if I had done this when I was Assistant Secretary, if I had come to you, Chairwoman Salazar, and said, I am terminating half of our democracy programs in Venezuela, you wouldn't have said, well, besides that. You would have been very cross with me and rightly so, right? And I am saying you have got to be angry about this.

Ms. SALAZAR. We are angry about the whole situation with Venezuela, and the Biden administration did a gesture in trying to bring democracy back and look what Maduro did.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. And it didn't work. No, I understand. It didn't work.

Ms. SALAZAR. He laughed. Maduro laughed in our faces, in the face of the United States and the government at the time. So—

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It didn't work.

Ms. SALAZAR. So the other witnesses, Mr. Quirk.

Mr. QUIRK. Yes.

Ms. SALAZAR. Any ideas of what do you think this money—where else can we do?

Mr. QUIRK. Thank you very much, Chairwoman. The question is really an important one. The NED, the State Department, we have an evidence-based set of tools, resources and programming that we have used in countless other places, to include Venezuela, that are proven to bolster opposition movements. It all comes back to resource levels.

If we have access to the funds to provide that type of support. If staff at NED, IRI, NDI that are ready to go.

Second, from a diplomatic standpoint, I think as a country, being clear that we stand on the side of the oppressed and those pushing back on authoritarian regression, being consistent with those messages.

Ms. SALAZAR. Mr. Destro, your idea, if you were to be the one guiding the resources, where would you put them when it comes to democracy in Venezuela?

Mr. DESTRO. One thing you can do, and I think that it is uniquely within your power to do that, is to beef up the foundations of Evidence-Based Policy Act, you know, which basically should be requiring transparent evaluation of all these programs so we get this return on investment question. And right now it is a data-integration model, but what we need to do is move it into a real evaluation model.

The second thing is, as you look at the reauthorization of these offices, you need to make sure that, by statute, you break down barriers among the agencies, OK? Because if I had called over to HHS, they would have said, who are you, click, you know. But if I actually call across the hallway to INL, I mean, they would have said, who are you, click.

I mean, so, you know, that is even though I, as DRL, had statutory authority to maintain oversight. So it is the process, you know, that I am worried about. I think we can make the money work, you know, but it is how we spend it.

Ms. SALAZAR. You made it very clear that is the process on how we structure these programs. And thank you.

Now I yield back, and I recognize the ranking member for 5 minutes. Thank you.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairwoman.

And I say to Tom's point, it was IRI and NDI that helped expose that the last Venezuelan elections were not free and fair elections. And so even though it is true Maduro is still in place, it was that work that helped expose the elections, I think, as fraudulent and exposed him to his people.

But I wanted to followup on something you said, Mr. Destro. You indicated that you disagree with the proposal to move foreign assistance programming responsibilities to the regional bureaus.

Can you speak further on this? And what challenges would such a change pose and how would it dilute the prioritization of human rights?

Mr. DESTRO. Well, I think that when you are dealing with—let me give you a real concrete example. The Rohingya, right, they live right on the boundary of East Asia and South Asia, right, the bureaus. Who takes care of them? I mean, they are in orbit in both bureaus.

And so when the focus of the regional bureaus ought to be the management of bilateral relationships between our country and other countries, but when it comes to human rights programs, humanitarian, that is actually much more of a focus. And that is one of the reasons I don't want it to go into the regionals is because it is going to get lost there.

And so when you look at a question that Representative Smith and I have looked at a lot, which is the issue of all the genocide going on in Nigeria, right? If I call over, as Assistant Secretary, to the Intelligence Community and I want to know who is buying the AK-47s, who is buying the Land Rovers that they are using to kill villagers, you know, what I am going to get from the State Department is, oh, it is all climate change.

What I want to know is, wait a minute, I need the financial intelligence, and somebody is going to hang up on me. I could not get that kind of information out of the Intelligence Community. And so only you can break that down for us, you know.

So I have some very—like, I really mean it when I say we ought to have a little working group and say, look, what are the concrete things that you, only you, as Congress, can do, and then let the executive branch try to figure out how to do it.

Mr. CASTRO. [Presiding.] Thank you. I yield back. Rep. Smith?

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Castro, Ranking Member.

Just, Tom, I would like to yield to you, because I know you wanted to answer the original question, and then I will put out another question as well. You might want to incorporate it.

The idea of the regional bureaus getting even more of a voice I think is a very dangerous possibility and a very dangerous outcome for human rights. I can't tell you how many times on the traf-

ficking issue, no matter who is at the White House. We have had individual Ambassadors and the regional bureaus weigh in in such a way so that with the TIP Ambassador-at-large and with the TIP Office, it is a large number of very, very—you know, they are policy experts.

They have got data calls from each one of the embassies. They have gone through it. And very often their narrative, which would lead to a Tier 3 designation, doesn't match what the tierage was.

There have been numerous examples where other issues intervene at the regional bureau level and Secretary of State level that then said, no, we are not going to make you Tier 3 because of fill in the blank.

Oman got an inflated grade because they were working on the agreement with Iran. We saw it with Malaysia, because the TPP would not then apply to them if they were Tier 3. And they were Tier 3 absolutely. And others look at that and say, wait a minute, they politicize this process.

So those regional bureaus, they have a role to play, but they can't have an outsize role when it comes to human rights, because human rights always is on page 6 unless you are the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Labor and Human Rights. Then you are walking point every day of the week.

So I think we need to make sure that that—and then the knowledge base is that much higher too, you know, the commitment. That is why you wanted that job, Tom. That is why you wanted that job, Bob. Because you are committed to these human rights issues.

So our hearing that we had the other day, I asked a number of questions. One was an ambassador. And we talked about TIP and he said, I fought like hell to make sure my country wasn't on it, but then, you know, we were—because it does complicate the statecraft that they are involved with, or so they think. I think if we put human rights first, everything else will fall into line. As you were saying, stand with the oppressed, not the oppressor.

So if you could speak to that, because I think that would be a very flawed outcome. We saw with David Goldman, remember, Tom, when his son was abducted to Brazil. We got nowhere for 5 years. You know, I got into it the final year, because he wasn't my constituent. And then I went down there and I realized that it was on page 5 of the prioritization with regards to our work with Lula in Brazil. And, you know, that is just not good.

So maybe you could speak to that. And, Tom, you also wanted to, I think.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Yes, this is a key point. It is the job of our regional Assistant Secretaries and our Ambassadors first and foremost to manage the relationship with the foreign country. That is not a criticism. That is just No. 1 of their job description.

And often, not always, that means they are going to be avoiding the most sensitive issues that automatically create friction with that government. That is why Congress created the trafficking in persons Ambassador. That is why Congress created the Assistant Secretary for DRL, to ensure that when there is a dispute, when there is a conflict between competing interests, the Secretary of State and the President are going to hear from two officials of

equivalent rank and stature, both of whom are confirmed by Congress and accountable to you as well as to them. And then whatever decision is made is the decision that is made.

If you put the staff—if you put the function within the regional bureaus, it is never going to get up to the President and the Secretary of State if the regional bureau doesn't want it to. And that would defeat the purpose of all the laws that—you know, you have passed more of these laws probably than any Member in this body. And all of them depend on the institution implementing the law being strong.

So the final point, don't wait for the authorization bill. You know how hard it is to pass those. I hope you do. But even if you do, this is all going to be settled before you can pass a bill. This is a three-alarm fire right now, and Secretary Rubio needs to hear from all of you before all of this stuff is settled.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Let me just—your point was well-taken. I agree with it. I will never forget—and, again, this isn't partisan because we have had problems with both sides of the aisle on this at the White House.

But when Boko Haram is on a killing spree, I went over, went to Jos, met with Archbishop Kaigama, who was an amazing man, met with the Imam, who he said, they are not us. Muslims are being killed too, and they are and they continue to be killed as well.

But Johnny Carson, who was the Assistant Secretary, so the Regional Bureau for Africa, very good man. But I asked him repeatedly to designate Boko Haram as an FTO, foreign terrorist organization, and he wouldn't do it or they wouldn't do it, the administration.

They kept saying that, you know, they are just trying to embarrass Goodluck Jonathan. I said, embarrass? There is a whole another agenda here. And the Chibok girls was just one very terrible, you know, manifestation of that, but it was happening all the time to boys as well, where they would kill them as well as other people.

On the day when he left and there was a new Assistant Secretary, on the day I was marking up a bill, it was Sense of the Congress so we couldn't do more than that, but it would have said, please designate—find out where they are getting their weapons and their money. On that day's date, 3 years after we started the effort, which was stymied I believe by the regional bureau, the FTO designation happened. And it was late, but thankfully it happened, and I applauded them and thanked them profusely.

But, again, what you are saying—and it is true—you know, the Nigerian Government did not want it. They thought it was like a black mark. And they are saying the same thing about CPC now on the religious freedom side. I said, it is called Country of Particular Concern. We are concerned for your people, that is why we are doing this, Christian and Muslim. And there are more Christians dying in Nigeria.

I had another hearing on that just the other day and met with 16 Members of the House of Representatives from Abuja earlier this week. And I said, you got to realize there is a two-step process. One is the designation. Think of it as a mirror to help you too to

crack down on this terrible abuse, the Fulani and the Boko Haram and ISIS, West Africa and others. And I think they got that.

The part two is the sanctions. There was an effort you recall, Tom, a strong effort to help the Abuja Government, the Goodluck Jonathan's government. There was a Fusion Center, all this good—so then everyone kept telling me, including many in the administration, well, the Leahy amendment precludes us from helping them.

So I had a hearing on it. I had the Under Secretary come and testify. She was excellent. She goes, half of the Nigerian military can be trained in counterinsurgency, at least, pursuant to the Leahy Amendment. And then we had specific breakouts of units that could be trained tomorrow. And it never happened. And they were dying to try to get out there and stop this cancer from spreading to a stage four, which it has become, the type of cancer.

So, again, the regional bureau, you know, I understand you want to make friends but make friends with human rights as your lead. And that is why we have the bureaus like DRL.

I can tell Bob wants it.

Mr. DESTRO. Probably the most common argument I would get from a regional bureau, I would also add just for purposes of inclusion, the L Bureau, is you can't do that. We can't do that. You know, you are going to embarrass the government.

My reaction is, the job is to convince the government, you know. And you have to have every trick of the trade. Sometimes it is going to be economic. Sometimes it is going to be sanctions. But then there is the old—you know, one of my good friends in Nigeria, I showed him a list of grants. He says, wow, that is amazing.

None of it hits the ground, right? This is a big problem. I actually talked to people before I went to Abuja who were in Borno State. They were running peace-building programs, but it was too dangerous for them to go outside.

And when I made the suggestion, well, maybe we ought to shut that one down and move it someplace else, oh, no, no, no, you can't do that. You say, well, wait a minute. If it is not working, if it is too dangerous to go outside, then maybe you ought to reprogram the money.

So you have got the politics of reprogramming money and all this, plus you have the inertia, the literal drag of the regional bureaus and the L Bureau, you know, that basically say, you can't do that.

I have had to remind the lawyers, your job as a lawyer is to advise me on how to get things done, not to tell me I can't do it.

Mr. SMITH. Tom.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think these are conversations for a normal time. There will be no money to reprogram. There will be no bureau to reorganize. There will be no strategy to rejigger if things continue in the direction that they are heading right now.

If you guys can somehow stop this train and save the TIP Office and save the religious freedom process and save DRL and preserve the institutions that implement these programs and the funding that has gone to them, then we can have a conversation about how to improve it all.

And I will probably lose some of those arguments, because I am a Democrat and it is a Republican administration. That is OK. But right now, what we need all of you to do is to stop a train that is going to run over this 50, 60-year tradition of American support for human rights and democracy around the world. The rest is academic.

Mr. SMITH. Anybody else before we close? Thank you very much.

I would like to, on behalf of the chairwoman, thank our very distinguished witnesses for their testimony and the members for their questions.

The members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for the witnesses, and we will ask you to respond in writing, if you would.

Pursuant to the committee rules, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitations.

Without objection, the committee does stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:34 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Maria Salazar (R-FL), Chairwoman**

May 2, 2025

Revised

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere at 11:00 a.m. in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Thursday, May 8, 2025

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

LOCATION: 2172 RHOB

SUBJECT: Spread Freedom, Not Woke Values: An American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights

WITNESSES: The Honorable Robert A. Destro
Former Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. State Department

Dr. Patrick Quirk
Vice President of Strategy, Innovation, and Impact
The International Republican Institute (IRI)

** The Honorable Tom Malinowski
Former Member of Congress
Former Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. Department of State*

*NOTE: Witnesses added/changed.

****NOTE:** Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF WHEN SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

Day Thursday Date May 8, 2025 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 11:06 Ending Time 12:34

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairwoman Salazar, Rep. Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Spread Freedom, Not Woke Values: An American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

None

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:34

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Meeting on: Spread Freedom, Not Woke Values: An American Agenda for Democracy and Human Rights
Date: May 8, 2025

[illegible]

Committee on Foreign Affairs
Exhibit to Prepared Testimony of Robert A. Destro
before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Thursday, May 8, 2025

Republican Guidance Memorandum

*America First Diplomacy:
Examining Spending in the Biden State Department &
Ensuring Future Aid Advances America's National Security*

January 16, 2025 at 9:00 AM
2172 Rayburn House Office Building

This memorandum provides background and guidance to assist Committee Republicans in preparing for a **closed-door Member Roundtable with State Department briefers** titled: *America First Diplomacy: Examining Spending in the Biden State Department & Ensuring Future Aid Advances America's National Security*, on **January 16, 2025, at 9:00 AM in 2172 RHOB**.

Briefing Goals

1. Examine problematic foreign assistance spending that does not advance U.S. national security interests.
2. Discuss how career bureaucrats drive the foreign assistance design process, the award process, and program implementation.
3. Demonstrate that foreign assistance spending is being used to export radical ideology abroad.
4. Establish the principle that foreign assistance spending should only be provided if it advances U.S. national security interests.
5. Hold the State Department accountable for irresponsible foreign assistance spending, which undermines U.S. foreign policy goals and U.S. national security interests.

Background: The State Department's Foreign Assistance Spending Does Not Align With U.S. National Security Interests

For decades, U.S. foreign assistance has been an important extension of American influence and power on the global stage. At its best, U.S. foreign assistance bolsters U.S. national security and increases support for American priorities. However, the Biden-Harris State Department has misused millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars in foreign assistance, undermining U.S. national security and imposing radical views on other countries. Such misguided foreign spending damages the United States and significantly benefits our foreign adversaries.

Indeed, pursuant to congressional authorization, the State Department provides billions of dollars in grants and other financial awards to third parties as a means of conducting foreign policy.

Historically, these awards have contributed to U.S. national security interests, and the awards have enjoyed longstanding bipartisan support. However, during the Biden-Harris Administration, the State Department has ignored the traditional bipartisan consensus in foreign grantmaking and has deployed taxpayer dollars abroad in ways that undermine U.S. national security and promote a radical agenda abroad. These practices – highly detrimental to American foreign policy and an improper use of taxpayer dollars – are cause for alarm.

As these awards transfer taxpayer funds to thousands of disparate entities and entrust them with executing critical facets of America's global strategy, one would expect the Department to ensure that these programs promote policies, values, and objectives consistent with the national security interests of the United States and widely held American values. It would also be reasonable to expect the Department to maintain meticulous and transparent records of all such programs, in particular because awards, as federal expenditures, are subject to congressional oversight. However, the Department has failed on both counts.

Rather, a small cadre of career State Department bureaucrats deploy billions of dollars in foreign grants and awards through an opaque process which, in recent years, has demonstrated a marked shift in priorities. This must change: the United States must ensure that all foreign assistance spending supports U.S. national security interests.

From supporting the proselytization of atheism in Nepal, to funding counseling for migrants on how to circumvent U.S. immigration law, to funding drag shows in Ecuador, to spending tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars on a LGBTQ community center in Slovakia, to funding climate change programs in Assad held parts of Syria, the State Department has proven to be a poor steward of Congressional appropriations. The American people deserve to know how the State Department determined that such foreign spending advances the national security interests of the United States – and Congress must correct these misguided priorities.

In the 118th Congress, this Committee heard from private sector experts, as well as State Department officials from the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF), the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), and the Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), among other entities. The Committee learned first-hand how the foreign assistance spending process is deeply flawed, opaque, and unaccountable.

In December 2024, the Committee released a report (available [here](#)) outlining some of these findings. In addition, a SIGAR audit (available [here](#)) from earlier this year found that *the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) could not demonstrate compliance with the State Department's partner vetting requirements*, implicating all DRL programming in Afghanistan, as discussed further below.

Now, ahead of the incoming Trump administration, the Committee will hear directly from career State Department personnel responsible for implementing the Biden-Harris State Department's radical foreign assistance agenda. This briefing is a first step to bring foreign assistance spending back in line with American national security interests.

DRL & IRF Spending That Does Not Advance U.S. National Security Interests

NOTE FOR MEMBERS: The following list of Department spending is based on descriptions provided to the Committee from the Administration. Each of these spending items was administered by DRL and IRF and thus the witnesses can be asked about any of these items.

The list is supplemented by an appendix at the end of this memorandum that highlights the Biden-Harris administration's misguided priorities and wasteful programming that fails to meaningfully advance U.S. foreign policy and or national security. The appendix contains information outside the scope of what the witnesses can speak to, given their placement and roles in the Department. It is included for illustrative purposes only.

- **U.S. Department of State, IRF Office: Promoting Atheism in Nepal (Increasing Diversity, Equality, and Security in South Asia (IDEAS) Grant, \$446,700 in re-obligated FY16/FY17 DF/HRDF Funds (awarded in 2021)):** This grant was managed by the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) with support from DRL. The grant awarded \$446,700 to Humanists International, an international NGO based in the UK. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) published in 2021 for the program was titled "Promoting and Defending Religious Freedom Inclusive of Atheist, Humanist, Non-Practicing and Non-Affiliated Individuals," and, as a part of the program, the Department-approved proposed programming included training sessions intended "to help [humanist] organizations [in Nepal] to recruit new members and increase their membership scope and income." Put simply, the grantee intended to use its funding to spread humanism in Nepal in violation of the Establishment Clause.
- **DRL Programs in Afghanistan:**
 - A damning [SIGAR report](#) from July 2024 found that DRL "Could Not Demonstrate Compliance with State Partner Vetting Requirements." Federal sanctions law prohibits U.S. agencies from making transactions with certain individuals and entities linked to terrorism. At State, all bureaus are required to perform risk assessments for each program, and the Foreign Affairs Manual also suggests, though does not require, an additional risk mitigation measure called Risk Analysis Management counterterrorism namecheck vetting, or 'RAM vetting,' for programs at heightened risk of aid diversion.
 - From 1 March through 30 November 2022, DRL made seven different awards totaling over \$12 million to implementing partners in Afghanistan but could only provide SIGAR auditors with the required risk assessments for three of its seven awards. In addition, two of risk assessments DRL did provide lacked crucial unique identifying information like the award's name, number, or implementing partner. Finally, DRL began implementing two awards even though two RAM eligibility determinations were still "in process."

- DRL’s failed audit—due to its inability to preserve required documentation or its unwillingness to turn such documents over—is deeply concerning, especially in light of reports that “over 1,000 new national NGOs have registered with the so-called [Ministry of Economy], and there are rumors that many of these newly registered NGOs may have Taliban affiliations” (SIGAR-24-31-AR). SIGAR concluded that “The risk of Taliban-founded NGOs...benefiting from U.S. taxpayer funds underscores the importance of State complying with its own vetting and document retention requirements.”
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Civil Society Programs in Sudan, Supporting Independent Labor Unions (\$1,000,000), August 2023:** The listed purpose of this DRL award was to support Sudan’s return to a democratic transition by programing that worked to strengthen the capacity of independent labor unions. The program, like all DRL efforts in Sudan, was designed to incorporate maximum flexibility to respond to changes in the operating environment. Activities included building the skills of independent labor unions and workers’ organizations to advocate for workers’ rights. Even if the political environment in Sudan remained non-conducive towards advocacy through a formal legal or political process, independent unions and workers’ rights associations, which have a natural and deep constituency in Sudan, still play a crucial role in providing support for civilian actors under duress.
 - *[HFAC STAFF COMMENTARY] Four months into a devastating civil war, including a declaration of genocide, the State Department funded \$1 million to prop up labor unions in Sudan. The \$1 million could have been better utilized by supporting the immense humanitarian requirement for the over 25 million Sudanese in need.*
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs in the People’s Republic of China (\$12,000,000 FY23 ESF Funds):** With this grant, DRL seeks to promote labor rights, the rule of law, anti-corruption, and civic engagement to allow citizens to participate meaningfully in the public sphere in the PRC.
 - *[HFAC STAFF COMMENTARY] There is no way to measure success in a closed environment like the PRC and continuing to provide a blank check to citizens gives us zero oversight over where the money is going to. For all we know, it’s going towards buying new cameras to surveil people in Xinjiang.*
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL, Human Rights and Democracy Fund, CN 22-136** The \$210 million CN in question for these organizations, CN 22-136, is rife with vague “diplomacy” language, including references to how taxpayer dollars are supporting “capacity building.”
 - Under this CN, ITS Rio, received almost \$1 million to “channel gig workers collective voice in Brazil and Colombia” (Dep’t of State, Federal Assistance Award for Instituto de Tecnologia e Sociedade 1 (Sep. 21, 2022). ITS Rio describes “its mission as “mobilizing progressive forces to capture value or oppose threats and design collaboration between competing interests for the public good.” But ITS Rio fails to clarify which progressive forces it is funding

and what “progressive” means in the context of free speech and deregulated internet services. Further, there appears to be no connection between ITS Rio’s mission to advocate for gig workers’ rights and the advancement of American interests in Brazil, a country where China and Russia continue to land lucrative resource contracts and undermine American policies in the Western hemisphere.

- Also under this CN, a subgrantee of the International Republican Institute (IRI), Proud to Be Us Laos provides training and talking points for “government counterparts who expressed interest in learning how youth can contribute to national development” of LGBTQI+ rights (Dep’t of State, Federal Assistance Award for International Republican Institute 1 (Sep. 28, 2022)). IRI received such funding as part of the Promoting Accountability, Inclusivity, and Resiliency Support Program, an ongoing collaboration between DRL and a select group of NGOS. DRL is therefore funding gay rights education, something inherently related to sexual activity, for Laotian children. This is particularly shocking coming from IRI, an organization founded on Reaganite principles to promote republicanism and “independent political institutions” abroad.
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL West Africa Program, “Strengthening LGBTQI+ Human Rights in Francophone West and Central Africa” (\$1,000,000 noticed in FY24):** With American taxpayer dollars, DRL is using human rights appropriations to fund organizations which promote radical feminism, LGBTQI+ activism, and environmental justice. In this case, according to the notice of funding opportunity, the listed purpose of this award includes: 1) Enhance the ability of Francophone African LGBTQI+ organizations and networks to protect, and affirm, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of LGBTQI+ individuals and communities; 2) Empower Francophone LGBTQI+ organizations and leaders to respond effectively to attacks on human rights and engage and partner with global LGBTQI+ communities, feminist communities, environmental justice movements, and other grassroots human rights movements without discrimination and work collectively on common issues of concern within the human rights community; and 3) Strengthen the ability of Francophone African LGBTQI+ organizations and networks to organize against and address violence, legal and policy restrictions, and mis-/disinformation (including anti-LGBTQI legislation, rhetoric, and closing civic space), and support more resilient communities.
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs, Congressional Notification 23-166:** In this CN, the State Department allocated \$16,050,000 for global programs to advance the human rights of “Marginalized Populations,” which is defined to include “LGBTQI+ persons.” Some of the program activities receiving this funding include preventing “online violence” and “developing capacity to study, identify, understand and combat disinformation.”
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs, Congressional Notification (CN) 24-190:** This CN notified \$78.5 million for human rights and democracy programs. Below are illustrative examples.

- In South and Central Asia, DRL provides \$750,000 for “expanding media and civil society actors’ ability to monitor, track, analyze, and report on disinformation and hate speech on social media, and equipping civil society to advocate to governments on how to clamp down on disinformation and hate speech without impeding freedom of expression.”
 - In Europe and Eurasia, DRL provides \$1,150,000 to support programming “promoting government transparency and accountability by bolstering civil society actors and human rights defenders to advocate on environmental issues.”
 - In the Western Hemisphere, DRL provides \$2,000,000 to support human rights defenders “representing marginalized communities...working on environmental issues of concern in Central America and the Amazon Basin.”
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs, Congressional Notification 24-156:** This CN proposed \$8.6 million under the Marginalized Populations Global Programs line item for the Global Equality Fund. Per the State Department’s website, the fund “provides critical resources to civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights defenders, including those working to increase the visibility and empowerment of queer women, transgender, intersex people, and members of other marginalized LGBTQI+ communities.” In addition, this \$8.6M included programs for “developing legal analyses and strategic litigation to push back against new laws criminalizing vulnerable populations,” as well as “facilitating dialogues...”to improve knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding vulnerable groups.”
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs, Congressional Notification 23-036:** One of the programs notified in this CN proposes \$6.5 million for a “Fundamental Freedoms Fund,” whose “goal is to rapidly respond to emerging challenges or opportunities as they unfold on the ground in countries that infringe on the fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, expression, and religion.” Among the program activities is “building media literacy and countering hate speech while respecting freedom of expression.”
 - 1) A later [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (number [SFOP0010171](#)) made clear that the Fundamental Freedoms Fund will fund activities including “countering hate speech” and “combating malign disinformation.” DRL also specified that the total funding floor was “\$7,250,000 (of which \$750,000 must go to LGBTQI+ projects).”
- **U.S. Department of State, DRL Human Rights and Democracy Programs -- Lebanon (\$750,000 to \$1,150,000) Notice of Funding Opportunity** (number [DFOP0014394](#)): The project noticed in this NOFO (May 2024) was titled “DRL Empowering Independent Media to Combat Hate Speech and Disinformation.” Among the project’s four outcome goals is enhancing “independent media outlets’ ability to counter hate speech and negative rhetoric against vulnerable communities”

Briefers**Patricia Davis**

Patricia Davis was a director of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) Office of Global Programs, during which she oversaw the development and funding of DRL's human rights, democracy, and labor programs, ensuring the programs are tied to the Department's foreign policy goals. One major initiative she oversees is the multilateral Global Equality Fund, which supports nearly 20 million USD for programs to promote the rights and protections of the LGBT community worldwide. Dr. Davis began her government career in DRL as a desk officer for Europe and later for Central Asia. She then joined the National Security Council as director of democracy and human rights and later served as senior advisor for

democracy at the US Agency for International Development before returning to DRL in her current position. Prior to her government service, she was a professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame, USA. Dr. Davis holds a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

**Shawna Wilson**

As of January 2025, Shawna Wilson is the director of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) Office of Global Programs. Previously, she served as Senior Rule of Law Advisor in the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT), U.S. Department of State, where she provided technical advice on CT's engagement in terrorism-related criminal justice efforts. She also was Deputy Director of CT's Office of Multilateral Affairs, where she coordinated with multilateral and regional partners on counterterrorism issues, with a focus on criminal justice. Before joining CT, she was Justice Team Leader in the Office of Criminal Justice Assistance and Partnership in the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, as well as a U.S. Supreme Court Fellow.

She also served in various roles at USAID, focusing on rule of law and democracy issues in the Balkans, Central Asia, and other states of the former Soviet Union.



Mariah Mercer

Mariah Mercer has served as Deputy to the Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom and Deputy Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom since 2021, where she leads a team of experts promoting freedom of religion and belief for all as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy. Ms. Mercer has 20 years of experience in communications and human rights. Previous roles in the office have included Unit Chief for Near East Affairs, Unit Chief for East Asia Pacific, Deputy Coordinator for the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, and senior advisor for atrocity prevention. Ms. Mercer joined the State Department as an intelligence analyst and served as senior human rights analyst in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Office of the Geographer and Global Issues. She focused on human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings, with expertise in authoritarian and closed countries, including Burma, China, and Syria. Before joining the U.S. government, Ms. Mercer was a journalist with the Findlay Publishing Company. Ms. Mercer received a B.A. in political science and creative writing from Miami University and M.A. in International Affairs from the Australian National University. She was born and raised in Findlay, Ohio.



Dan Nadel

Daniel Nadel has served as Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom since August 2015, where he is responsible for promoting freedom of religion and belief for all as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy. Dan leads the office's efforts to monitor religiously motivated abuses, persecution, and discrimination worldwide, and to recommend and implement policies and programs to address these concerns. He joined the office in 2011 as Unit Chief for South and Central Asia, and served as Acting Deputy for several years before assuming his current role. Dan joined the State Department in 2006 as a Presidential Management Fellow, and served from 2006 to 2011 in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's Office of European Affairs, where he promoted human rights and democratic governance in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and elevated the plight of Europe's Roma minority. Dan received a B.A. and M.A. in International Affairs and a Juris Doctor from George Washington University. He was born and raised in Queens, New York.

ILLUSTRATIVE APPENDIX:

Further examples of ideological and misguided spending by the Biden-Harris administration that fail to advance U.S. national security interests.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Legal Counseling for Migrants, PRM Bureau (\$2,983,000 to Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) from FY21-FY22): During FY 2021 and FY 2022, PRM provided \$2,983,000 to HIAS’s Mexico operations. HIAS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides “services to refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced and stateless persons around the world.” A PRM-funded presentation delivered by an implementor entitled “Information for People Who Wish to Enter the U.S. to Request Asylum,” counseled migrants on how to obtain asylum in the U.S.

Indirect Funding for Migrant Abortions, PRM Bureau: So long as abortion is legal (and it is in Mexico), ‘reproductive health’ includes access to abortion. IOM is supportive of providing abortion access to migrants – IOM has stated that its “[p]lan for 2022-2025” award spending included “[b]uild[ing] the capacities of local health providers to assist migrants.” Such programming could involve supporting “reproductive health,” such as the provision of abortions. Further, according to HFAC’s investigation in the 118th Congress, IOM directed migrants in Northern Mexico to abortion providers. Because money is fungible, all PRM funds IOM received while helping migrants have abortions constituted indirect U.S. support.

U.S. Department of State, Cash and Voucher Assistance for Migrants, PRM Bureau:
“Strengthening the Humanitarian Response for Vulnerable People on the Move in Mexico.” (\$13,500,000, FY22 Voluntary Contribution to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) and **“Support Toward Self-Reliance for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants at the Northern Border of Mexico”** (\$16,882,941, FY19-FY21 Voluntary Contribution to IOM): This funding was awarded by PRM to IOM. Both of the programs, run by IOM, included cash and voucher-based assistance to migrants in Northern Mexico as a part of their intended outputs. Essentially, the programs gave economic incentives to migrants transiting to northern Mexico.

Drag Shows in Ecuador, ECA Bureau (\$20,600 in FY22 ASFF Drag Theater Program): The Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano ‘Abraham Lincoln,’ was to be awarded funding “to promote diversity and inclusion.” Recipient hosted 3 workshops, 12 drag theater performances, and produced a 2-minute documentary. The Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano ‘Abraham Lincoln’ planned to use a local theater, Dionisios Arte-Cultura-Identidad, for the drag program. The drag program planned to have young participants, some as young as 8 years old, engage in three workshops consisting of: (1) an artistic workshop where participants would decorate full-face masks, which would be displayed in exhibits displayed at the program’s play showcases, (2) a gender diversity workshop where a screening of the video “31 Trans” would be shown to participants, (3) and a drag make-up workshop where participants would have performed on a catwalk while wearing “transformative or fantasy art” costumes.

State spending (9.30.21-7.29.22)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Amount: \$47,020

To: Universidad de Los Andes (**Colombia**)

Listed Purpose: RAISE AWARENESS AND INCREASE THE TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION THROUGH THE OPERA AS ONE, BY AMERICAN COMPOSER LAURA KAMINSKY

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SCO20021GR3086_1900

State spending (9.18.23-11.15.23)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Amount: \$24,848

To: Association of American Voices (**Argentina**)

Listed Purpose: SUPPORT AN ARTS ENVOY PROGRAM WITH THE HOUSE OF XTRAVAGANZA. POST WILL MARK THE CELEBRATION OF LGBTQI+ PRIDE MONTH IN ARGENTINA SHOWCASING THE ARTISTIC WORK AND ACTIVISM OF THE HOUSE OF XTRAVAGANZA

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SAR20023GR0041_1900

State spending (9.2.24-7.31.25)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Amount: \$33,717

To: Fundacion Viviren Armonia A.C. (**Mexico**)

Listed Purpose: TO BRING THE #VIAJANDOCONBEN ROADSHOW TO U.S. CONSULATES AND AMERICAN SPACES IN MEXICO TO HIGHLIGHT U.S. VALUES AND ENGAGE TARGET AUDIENCES ON U.S. PRIORITIES WHILE PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA)

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SMX53024GR0065_1900

State spending (4.7.22-12.31.22)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Amount: \$32,000

To: Comision Intercambio Educ Entre Peru EUA (**Peru**)

Listed Purpose: COVER EXPENSES TO PRODUCE A TAILORED-MADE COMIC, FEATURING AN LGBTQ+ HERO TO ADDRESS SOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SPE50022CA0009_1900

State spending (9.25.23-6.28.24)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

Amount: \$44,130

To: Miscellaneous Foreign Awardees (**Colombia**)

Listed Purpose: THE QUEER ARCHIVE IS A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN

PDS BOGOTA AND NATIONAL LIBRARY OF COLOMBIA TO DOCUMENT THE HISTORY, CULTURE, AND STORIES OF THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY IN COLOMBIA
Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SCO20023GR4538_1900

State spending (9.1.21-2.1.22)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
Amount: \$55,750

To: Chicas Poderosas Inc (**Argentina**)

Listed Purpose: A JOURNALISTIC AND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN FIVE REGIONS OF ARGENTINA CARRIED OUT BY A TEAM OF FEMALE AND LGBTQ JOURNALISTS PHOTOGRAPHERS AND DESIGNERS LOCATED IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SAR20021GR3022_1900

USAID spending (9.30.23-5.5.2024)

Funding Office: USAID/**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**
Amount: \$3,315,446

To: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Listed Purpose: BEING LGBTI IN THE CARIBBEAN.

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_AID517IO1700001_7200

State spending (9.17.21-6.24.22)

Funding Office: BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
Amount: \$7,071.58

To: Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (**Canada**)

Listed Purpose: AS PART OF THE BUILDING BACK BETTER INITIATIVE, THE GRANT SUPPORTED A THREE-PART SPEAKER AND NETWORKING SERIES TO EXPAND KNOWLEDGE AROUND SUPPLIER DIVERSITY IN SUPPORT OF THE BIPOC, LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Link: https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SCA52521GR3036_1900

EUROPE

State spending (2023-2025)

Funding office: EUR

Amount: \$80,000

To: INICIATIVA INAKOST (**Slovakia**)

Purpose: "THIS AWARD AIMS TO SUPPORT OPERATION OF A FULL-FLEDGED COMMUNITY CENTER FOR LGBTQI+ PEOPLE IN BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SLO10023GR0043_1900

State spending (2024-2025)

Funding office: EUR/ACE

Amount: \$16,500

To: "MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN AWARDEES" (**Albania**)

Purpose: "THE PROJECT AIMS TO FOSTER A UNITED AND EQUAL QUEER-FEMINIST DISCOURSE IN ALBANIAN SOCIETY, AMPLIFYING INTERSECTIONAL NARRATIVES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE. RECOGNIZING THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ+ VOICES AND THE NEED TO BRIDGE THE QUEER AND FEMINIST MOVEMENT]"

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SAL60024GR0066_1900

State spending (2024-2025)

Funding office: EUR

Amount: \$10,000

To: "MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN AWARDEES" (**Lithuania**)

Purpose: "THIS PROGRAM WILL PROMOTE AMERICAN VALUES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, AND SHARE BEST PRACTICES IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH SPECIFIC TARGETS FOR INCREASED AWARENESS, SOLIDARITY, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DEI PRINCIPLES."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SLH50024GR0022_1900

State spending (2024-2025)

Funding office: EUR

Amount: \$8,000

To: "MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN AWARDEES" (**Cyprus**)

Purpose: "RAISE AWARENESS AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY IN CYPRUS."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SCY60024GR0072_1900

State spending (2024-2025)

Funding office: ECA

Amount: \$8,446

To: Youth Educational Forum (**North Macedonia**)

Purpose: “TO ORGANIZE AND HOST THE AMERICAN SPACES DEIA WORKSHOP FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTH-CENTRAL EUROPE IN SKOPJE.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SMK80024GR0084_1900

State spending (2023-2025)

Funding office: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Amount: \$12,531

To: The Brussels Binder (**Belgium**)

Purpose: “DEIA TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NATO HQ STAFF TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES. IT WILL INCLUDE 4 TRAININGS.”

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SBE50023CA0004_1900

USAID spending (2024-2029)

Funding office: BUREAU FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH, PARTNERSHIP, AND INNOVATION

Amount: \$1,929,783

To: American Bar Association (**Western Balkans**)

Listed Purpose: “Shield: strengthening human rights, information integrity, equality, and democracy for the LGBTQI+ population in the western Balkans”—further details list predominately in North Macedonia

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_7200AA24CA00023_7200/

USAID spending (2022-2025)

Funding office: USAID

Amount: \$1.5 million

To: GRUPA IZADJI (**Serbia**)

Purpose: “THIS ACTIVITY AIMS TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN SERBIA’S WORKPLACES AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES, BY PROMOTING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF AND OPPORTUNITY FOR LGBTQI+ PEOPLE IN SERBIA. IT WILL FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT THAT INCREASES EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL FOR LGBTQI+ PERSONS, EXPANDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR LGBTQI+ ENTREPRENEURS, AND REDUCES WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION.”

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_72016922FA00001_7200

State spending (2022)

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$70,884

To: CEILIURADH COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE (**Ireland**)

Purpose “DELIVER A LIVE MUSICAL EVENT TO PROMOTE THE U.S. AND IRISH SHARED VALUES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY.”

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SEI30022GR0010_1900

State spending (2021)

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$85,366

To: "MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN AWARDEES" (**Ireland**)

Purpose: for an event to "SHOWCASE INNOVATIVE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE UNITED STATES AND IRELAND."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SEI30021GR3005_1900**State spending (2022)**

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$60,688

To: "UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE" (**Netherlands**)

Purpose: for a "FUND SPORT FOR GOOD: CELEBRATING DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUALITY IN THE NETHERLANDS."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SNL80021GR3030_1900**State spending (2023-2024)**

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$49,740

To: "STOWARZYSZENIE NA RZECZ OSOB LGBT TOLERADO" (**Poland**)

Purpose: for "ORGANIZATION OF THE 6TH CONGRESS OF MARCHING CITIES AND THE 2ND CAMP OF POLISH PRIDES ALLIANCE."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SPL90023GR0045_1900**State spending (2023-2024)**

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$48,500

To: "FUNDACJA DAJEMY DZIECIOM SILE" (**Poland**)

Purpose: for "LGBT PLUS ME: EMPOWERING POLISH YOUTH AS LGBT+ ALLIES."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SPL90023GR0046_1900**State spending (2022)**

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$39,652

To: "THE EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL LIMITED" (**United Kingdom**)

Purpose: "SUPPORT A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS TO HIGHLIGHT SHARED VALUES BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND THE UNITED STATES, ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL ISSUES AROUND GENDER IDENTITY AND INEQUALITY, RACIAL EQUITY, AND DIVERSITY."

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SUK56022GR0003_1900

State spending (2021-2022)

Funding Office: EUR

Amount: \$37,197

To: "MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN AWARDEES" (**Ireland**)

Purpose: to "DELIVER A PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES" in Ireland

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SEI30021GR3011_1900

MIDDLE EAST – NORTH AFRICA – CENTRAL ASIA

USAID Pier Project in Gaza:

\$350 million in aid to Gaza in FY24 despite ongoing issues constraining distribution on the ground, including high rates of diversion, which were not resolved by Biden’s pier \$250 million pier project. [USAID’s Gaza Response: External Factors Impaired Distribution of Humanitarian Assistance Through the JLOTS Maritime Corridor | Office of Inspector General](#)

USAID Solar Energy Projects in Lebanon:

\$7,458,800 FY 2023 ESF (USAID CN 11) for a solar energy debt fund extending credit to Lebanese business to procure and install solar/photovoltaic systems. Since these systems were not acquired directly by the U.S., they were not subject to the same restrictions outlined under Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act which prohibits funding for goods made in Xinjiang Province with forced labor where a majority of solar products are manufactured.

USAID Developing National Renewable Energy Strategy in Libya:

USAID funding for Libya’s national renewable energy strategy – GoGreen—expanding use of solar panels. [Solar Power is Set to Takeoff in Libya with USAID Support | Libya | News | U.S. Agency for International Development](#)

USAID spending (2021-2026)

Funding office: BUREAU FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH, PARTNERSHIP, AND INNOVATION

Amount: \$747,314

To: “DOMESTIC AWARDEES (UNDISCLOSED)”

Purpose: To create various GS-13 level LGBTI Advisor positions with USPSC (US Personal Services Contractor); Descriptor listed for one transaction on page: “THE IPI/ID LGBTIQ+ ADVISOR CARRIES OUT A DIVERSE SET OF WORK ASSIGNMENTS RELATED TO ADVANCING PROTECTIONS, INCLUSION, AND RIGHTS FOR LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SPANS RESEARCH, PROGRAMMING, TRAINING, AND POLICY.”

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_7200AA21S00013_7200_-NONE_-NONE-

State: Climate Change Programs for Assad Regime:

\$100 million contribution, including \$25M in FY22 ESF (CN 22-349), to the Adaption Fund despite climate change programs in Assad held parts of **Syria**. This included a 3.5-year long project jointly developed by the regime to further national priorities in Eastern Ghouta, where the regime deployed chemical weapons against Syrian civilians in 2013.

**The Biden administration blew HFAC GOPs hold on CN 22-349.*

STATE/USAID: Continued assistance to the UN Yemen Response benefiting the Houthis:

\$219,739,358 in FY24 funding for aid in Houthi controlled areas despite ongoing crisis. This includes \$58,126,250 for World Food Program (WFP) despite concerns about Houthi diversion

of food aid for recruitment of child soldiers, and ongoing detention of U.S. staff and more recently UN/INGO workers.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE YEMEN RESPONSE IN FY 2024¹

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
USAID/BHA			
IOM	Health, Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA), MPCA, Protection, Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Countrywide	\$18,224,300
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$1,392,000
UNFPA	HCIM; Health; Protection	Countrywide	\$20,789,000
UNICEF	Nutrition—U.S. In-Kind Specialized Nutrition Products	Countrywide	\$30,328,308
	Nutrition, WASH	Countrywide	\$15,700,000
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$2,100,000
WFP	Logistics, Nutrition	Countrywide	\$40,979,450
	Nutrition—U.S. In-Kind Specialized Nutrition Products	Countrywide	\$11,546,800
	Food Assistance—U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Countrywide	\$5,600,000
WHO	Health, Nutrition	Countrywide	\$5,050,000
Implementing Partners	Food Assistance—Cash Transfers for Food, Food Vouchers; HCIMA; Health; Nutrition; Protection; WASH	Countrywide, Aden, Al Bayda', Ad Dali', Dhamar, Hajjah, Al Hudaydah, Ibb, Al Jawf, Lahij, Marib, Sa'dah, Sana'a, Ta'izz	\$48,183,500
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING			\$199,893,358
STATE/PRM			
IOM	Protection	Countrywide	\$3,000,000
UNHCR	Health, MPCA, Protection, Shelter	Countrywide	\$11,646,000
Implementing Partner	Protection	Countrywide	\$5,200,000
TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING			\$19,846,000
TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE YEMEN RESPONSE IN FY 2024			\$219,739,358

Condoms for Taliban Fighters (USAID)

FY23 funding notified in August 2024

\$15 million of Global Health Programs-USAID for Reproductive health and family planning programming in Afghanistan.

- This programming would allow USAID to increase access to and generate demand for voluntary family planning and reproductive health services, primarily the provision of contraceptives. This money would be used to provide funding for condoms and birth control pills for men and women in Afghanistan.

EAST ASIA/PACIFIC**USAID spending****Charging Stations in Vietnam**

APPROPRIATION CATEGORY: Economic Support Fund

Project Title and Country: Clean Energy/**Vietnam**

Intended Obligation: \$2,500,000 ESF-OCO FY 2020

DESCRIPTION: USAID supported the acquisition of charging stations that serve electric motorcycles and scooters in Vietnam's largest cities: Hanoi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City. USAID supported increasing access to electric motorbike charging stations, such as those that are employer-provided or local government-provided, as well as business ownership models for charging stations.

USAID Indonesia Coffee Enterprise Resilience Initiative (Resilient Coffee)

INTENDED OBLIGATION: \$425,622

FY24-FY25

This award will increase access to finance, climate resilience, and gender equality and social inclusion for small and medium sized coffee enterprises (SMEs) in **Indonesia**. USAID will leverage its local expertise to help build smallholder resilience by expanding access to finance for farmers and small coffee enterprises that lack access to credit and business education. The program will work with businesses to strengthen gender equity and social inclusion practices while implementing new digital solutions to improve the management and resilience of coffee enterprises. Finally, the partners will strengthen climate action in the coffee industry, with a focus on mitigating climate change, protecting vulnerable ecosystems, and supporting rural communities to adapt to climate impacts.

AFRICA

Highlight from USAID CN #19

USAID, Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI) / Inclusive Development (ID) Hub: Human Rights (\$15.5 million (\$3.5 million FY24 DA, \$12 million FY24 DF)):

Listed Purpose: programming aimed to “advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people” in **Ethiopia and Zimbabwe** (as well as other countries throughout the world).

USAID spending (2021-2026)

Funding Office: **USAID/Zambia**

Amount: **\$24.9 million**

To: Tetra Tech

Listed Purpose: To reduce charcoal energy consumption in Zambia and deforestation attributable to charcoal production by supporting alternatives technologies and fuels used by households. “Charcoal use contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions that drive global climate change. Over 75 percent of peri-urban and urban households use charcoal as their primary cooking fuel source, regardless of income. Charcoal is accessible, affordable, and the culturally preferred cooking fuel of choice.”

<https://www.usaid.gov/zambia/fact-sheet/alternatives-charcoal>

U.S. Department of State, Africa Bureau: Africa Regional Economic Growth Program: Climate Change Programs (\$800,000 FY23 ESF):

Listed Purpose: “This program allowed posts to apply for up to \$100,000 for climate projects focused on adaptation and sustainable landscapes (or \$250,000 for multi-post projects). The Bureau of African Affairs targeted posts that do not have a USAID in-country presence or did not receive bilateral climate assistance. Concept notes were evaluated across metrics like anticipated impact, intensity of local needs, and complementarity with other USG programming. Funding advanced the Global Climate Change Initiative.” *Projects were only considered and selected after the CN process, allowing no visibility to HFAC regarding final determination.

Highlight from United States African Development Foundation CN – April 18, 2023

- Grantee: Godlwayo Phakama Bakery Cooperative Society Limited
- Project Title: Phakama Bakery Capacity Building Project
- Country: **Zimbabwe**
- Funding: \$69,922
- Duration: 18 months

Listed Purpose: The proposed project aimed to improve the production and professionalism of Phakama Bakery. The grant funding enabled Phakama Bakery to construct a larger bakery and equip it with professional baking equipment to ensure high quality products. Through this grant,

Phakama Bakery increased production of its baked goods and increase member incomes. ***Due to an HFAC hold, this program was never implemented**

USAID: Zimbabwe – Vana Trust Peanut Butter Production and Marketing:

Funding: \$10,774

Project ended in December 2023

Listed Purpose: N/A

Description: This project funded a peanut butter production and marketing training course in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a country that has chosen to align with the PRC and their President is under U.S. Global Magnitsky sanctions. Despite this, the Biden Administration chose to spend U.S. taxpayer money promoting peanut butter production and marketing.

<https://www.facebook.com/usembassyzimbabwe/posts/through-the-us-ambassadors-special-self-help-fund-vana-family-trust-vft-conducte/872923981540005/>

USAID spending

Funding Office: **USAID/Mozambique**

Amount: \$8.65 million notified in CN #183

To: Give Directly

Listed Purpose: “Providing cash transfers to increase purchasing power and grow demand for local agricultural services and supplies, increasing productivity and income and stimulating the local economy.” This program provides a \$1,000 cash transfer to households, over 4,000 so far, in select areas of Mozambique with no guardrails or accountability measures for the spending.

<https://www.givedirectly.org/mozambique/>

Sao Tome and Principe

USAID: \$130,000

Activity end date: May 2024

FSSMP Korfball for an Egalitarian Society in STP

BUILD 4 KORFBALL COURTS, PROVIDE EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING TO 16 PE

TEACHERS AND FACILITATE MATCHES BETWEEN SCHOOLS. CONDUCT 7

SPEAKING ACTIVITIES ON CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ATHLETIC EVENTS.

<https://foreignassistance.gov/> Activity ID: 72147



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 28, 2025

CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER

Consistent with sections 7015 and 7063(a) of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (Div. F, P.L. 118-47), as carried forward by the Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Div. A, P.L. 118-158), and section 34 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2706), the Department of State (the Department) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are notifying their intent to undertake a reorganization that would involve realigning certain USAID functions to the Department by July 1, 2025, and discontinuing the remaining USAID functions that do not align with Administration priorities.

In order to support this reorganization, the Department intends to restructure certain Department bureaus and offices that would implement programs and functions realigned from USAID. In connection with this transition, substantially all USAID personnel will be separated from federal service pursuant to Reduction-In-Force procedures. Consistent with applicable law, the Department intends to conduct a separate and independent hiring process to build foreign assistance capacity; the Department intends for this process to be available to eligible USAID personnel. During the transition period until such legislation is enacted, some funds from the Operating Expenses and Capital Investment Fund accounts in title II of the SFOAA may be made available to support these functions at the Department of State as outlined below.

The planned changes are explained further in the attached enclosure.

Recipients:

House Foreign Affairs Committee

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

House Appropriations Committee

House Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs

Senate Appropriations Committee

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

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We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

Sincerely,



Paul Guaglianone
Senior Bureau Official
Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Enclosure:

As stated.

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CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION

Introduction

Following Secretary Rubio's February 3, 2025, letter initiating consultations regarding USAID, the Department of State is notifying Congress of its intent to realign select USAID functions to the Department and to phase out others. This decision aligns with the Administration's broader efforts to streamline government functions, eliminate redundancy, and enhance accountability. The transition will ensure that foreign assistance operations are fully aligned with U.S. diplomatic and national security objectives. By integrating these functions into the Department, the Administration aims to improve efficiencies while maintaining critical humanitarian assistance and national security programs.

Background

USAID conducted a comprehensive review of its existing programs and awards to assess their alignment with U.S. foreign policy objectives. As a result of this review, numerous programs were discontinued, while 898 active grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts remain in place. The total amount for these activities is approximately \$78 billion in total vehicle value, with approximately \$8.3 billion in unobligated remaining value. Separately, USAID retains 421 operational and critical service contracts and other agreements.

In the initial phase of the transition, the Department would take on the management of USAID's financial and administrative systems and management of USAID's remaining operations and ongoing foreign assistance programs. These functions would, in the first instance, be provided as a service via interagency agreement in order to ensure that USAID programs can be safely and effectively administered by the Department during the transition period. Payment processing systems will be integrated into the Department to ensure a streamlined approach to managing life-saving humanitarian aid and national security programs. The State Department would also integrate USAID's partner vetting systems and is working to create a more efficient vetting system in the future. The Department intends for this first phase of the transition to be completed by July 1, 2025.

The Department anticipates requesting, in its fiscal year 2026 budget request, funding in the relevant Department appropriations to support the programs previously implemented by USAID, and proposing legislation to abolish USAID as an independent establishment.

Key Functions

The Department has carefully considered which USAID programs could continue to advance the Administration's foreign policy objectives. Those have been determined to be humanitarian assistance, global health functions, strategic investment, and limited national security programs. The Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) provides lifesaving humanitarian

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assistance—including food, water, shelter, emergency health care, sanitation and hygiene, and essential nutrition services—to the world’s most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach people. The Bureau for Global Health helps reduce health disparities, delivers lifesaving vaccines, promotes child and maternal health, and works toward control and elimination of malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases. These functions would be realigned to relevant bureaus and offices in the Department to ensure continuity of critical operations and that the United States continues to effectively administer life-saving and strategic aid across the globe. Other functions are likely to be substantially duplicative of existing functions and capabilities at the Department, and would be eliminated in the restructuring plan.

Reorganization

The Department would streamline its organizational structure to best accommodate the new humanitarian assistance and global health functions being absorbed from USAID. (See Organizational Chart in Tab #1). The Department has engaged both senior political and career staff to evaluate the most efficient and effective way to implement these USAID programs and activities.

Regional Bureaus

The Department’s robust regional bureaus would assume primary responsibility for the administration and coordination of bilateral and regional USAID programming. An office of foreign assistance would be established in each of the Department’s regional bureaus that do not already have such an office. The functions of USAID’s regional bureaus would be realigned to a corresponding State regional bureau. In addition, appropriate procurement and program management functions from USAID’s pillar and management bureaus would be realigned to the relevant Department bureaus. Management of assistance programs by regional bureaus would ensure that aid programs are delivered based on regional and local priorities, and consistent with applicable U.S. foreign policy interests in those locations.

USAID has the following five regional bureaus: (1) Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); (2) Europe & Eurasia (E&E); (3) Middle East (ME); (4) Africa (AFR); and (5) Asia (ASIA). Their functions would be realigned to Department’s regional bureaus as follows: AFR functions would be realigned to the Bureau of African Affairs; ASIA functions would be realigned to the Bureaus of South and Central Asian Affairs and East Asian and Pacific Affairs; E&E functions would be realigned to the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs; ME functions would be realigned to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; and LAC functions would be realigned to the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

State Department Office of Global Food Security (GFS)

The life-saving food and agriculture assistance programs from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance would be implemented by an expanded Office of Global Food Security reporting to the Department’s Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment (E). Focusing these efforts within the E family reflects the central role that commerce and supply chain infrastructure – both domestic and overseas – plays in USAID’s food assistance programming.

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The Department remains committed to ensuring that its food assistance programs continue to support American agricultural interests in efficiently delivering food to populations in need across the globe.

State Department Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy (GHSD)

The functions of USAID's Global Health (GH) bureau would be realigned to the State Department's Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy. The Department's existing GHSD bureau is already responsible for the administration of intergovernmental health programming and leads, manages, and oversees the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. USAID's GH programs are already closely coordinated with GHSD, which possesses relevant expertise to responsibly and efficiently manage USAID's life-saving programs. The Department anticipates making significant investments to ensure that GHSD is able to effectively support USAID's substantial PEPFAR and other life-saving health programs. Likewise, GHSD would be able to effectively manage USAID's critical health supply chain network with greater interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination.

Merging USAID's flagship global health programs into GHSD would result in considerable synergies, including for PEPFAR. For example, currently, GHSD plans and coordinates all appropriated funds for PEPFAR, and provides funds to USAID for program administration. Consolidating these functions into a single bureau would result in efficiencies in the planning and delivery of essential PEPFAR aid, allowing the Department's programs to achieve greater impact with fewer dollars, with fewer wasted dollars on indirect and administrative costs.

Other Functional Bureaus

In limited cases, certain programs may be managed by appropriate subject matter or functional bureaus at the Department. For example, the Department's Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) office manages exchange programs and could potentially implement some education assistance programs. Additionally, economic growth, trade, and energy-related programming could be administered by the Department's Bureau of Economic & Business Affairs (EB).

Other Bureaus

The remaining USAID bureaus and offices would be substantially abolished. Certain contracting, administrative, management, and executive functions would be realigned to analogous functions at the Department. For example, certain contracting functions and personnel in USAID's Office of Acquisitions and Assistance (OAA) may be integrated into the Department's Office of Global Acquisition to support expanded foreign assistance procurement activity. Legal, human resources, records management, and financial functions would also be integrated into appropriate offices at the Department.

The Department would also administer certain statutorily required functions, as required by law. For those statutory functions that are expressly assigned to USAID or its personnel under the law, the State Department will propose legislative changes to allow the State Department to perform any ongoing functions.

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USAID Personnel

Substantially all USAID personnel will be separated from federal service within the current fiscal year via Reduction-In-Force procedures, consistent with applicable law. As part of this process, USAID missions overseas would be closed, U.S. direct hire personnel overseas would be returned to the United States, and most USAID locally employed staff would be separated from U.S. government service in accordance with local law. USAID and the Department of State would dedicate significant resources to ensuring that affected U.S. direct hire personnel posted overseas would receive safe, timely, and accessible repatriation travel and other arrangements.

The Department intends to commence, consistent with applicable law, appropriate hiring processes to bring in relevant Civil Service and Foreign Service personnel with the relevant skills and expertise to build foreign assistance capacity and administer USAID programs and activities. The Department anticipates making these processes available for eligible USAID personnel and external candidates after the USAID Reduction-In-Force process has been completed, consistent with applicable law.

The Department is not currently in a position to accurately project its needs or the exact numbers of USAID personnel to be hired in connection with the realignment of USAID's programs and activities. The Department also anticipates assigning or assuming the contracts of certain former USAID domestic and foreign Personal Services Contractors (PSC) that possess relevant expertise and/or are located in strategic areas.

Financial Plan

The Department of State would manage USAID operational accounts and activities as required, ensuring that operations are closed out in a smooth and orderly transition. More specifically, the Contracting and Agreement Officer authorities and personnel would move to the Department. The Operating Expense (OE) and Capital Investment Fund (CIF) Accounts, which are appropriated to carry out section 667 of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) would be administered by the Department for activities associated with administering foreign assistance. During the first phase of the transition, USAID would transfer or allocate OE funds to the State Department under section 632 of the FAA. Consistent with section 667 of the FAA, the President designated USAID as the agency responsible for administering part I of the FAA. In a subsequent phase of the transition, the Department would request the President to designate the Department as that agency instead, once the Department is prepared to take on that responsibility.

The Department of State would assume responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming, ensuring that these programs are integrated with broader diplomatic efforts and national security goals. BHA would be abolished and its functions realigned to the Department. Funding associated with Title II of P.L. 480 (also known as Food for Peace) is appropriated to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in accordance with the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42), as

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carried forward by the FY 2025 Continuing Appropriations Act (P.L. 118-83). Under the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), the donation of agricultural commodities to foreign countries is implemented by the USAID Administrator. Secretary Rubio, as current acting Administrator of USAID, will continue to oversee the implementation of this program going forward until appropriate legislation is enacted authorizing the Department to assume this function.

Separately, USAID anticipates standing up a claims settlement process to ensure that any applicable claims of contractors, vendors, personnel or others are timely and adequately addressed by USAID. USAID would continue to operate this process until appropriate legislation is enacted to facilitate the transfer to the Department.

Resources

The table below reflects unobligated balances of accounts at USAID as of March 23, 2025.

USAID Fully and Partially-Managed Foreign Assistance Accounts		
Account	Account Symbol	USAID Unobligated Balance as of March 23, 2025 (in dollars)
Title II - USAID		
Operating Expenses (OE)	72 [] 1000	\$229,441,200
Capital Investment Fund (CIF)	72 [] 0300	\$133,008,903
Office of Inspector General (OIG)	72 [] 1007	\$30,938,711
Title III - Bilateral Economic Assistance		
Global Health Programs** ⁽¹⁾	72 19 [] 1031	\$7,082,476,856
Development Assistance (DA)*	72 [] 1021	\$7,378,979,411
International Disaster Assistance (IDA)	72 [] 1035	\$6,756,558,435
Transition Initiatives (TI)	72 [] 1027	\$81,408,484
Complex Crises Fund (CCF)	72 [] 1015	\$46,818,713
Economic Support Fund (ESF)*	72 [] 1037	\$5,647,197,058
Democracy Fund (DF)**	72 19 [] 1121	\$272,341,319
Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia (AEECA)*	72 [] 0306	\$847,228,217
Additional USAID accounts with unexpired unobligated balances		
Commodity Credit Corporation Title II and III (CT) ***	72 12 [] 2278	\$347,509,109
Commodity Credit Corporation (CC) ***	72 12 [] 4336	\$5,208,662
Central America and Caribbean Emergency Disaster Recovery Fund	72 [] 1096	\$4,545,538
Special Assistance Initiative (AI)	72 [] 1010	\$463,664
Assistance For The New Independent States of The Former Soviet Union (NI)	72 [] 1093	\$712,011
Sahel Development Program	72 [] 1012	\$474,512
Sub-Saharan Africa Disaster Assistance	72 [] 1040	\$81,818
Development Fund for Africa	72 [] 1014	\$0

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Global HIV/AIDS Initiative (GA)	72 [] 1030	\$277,708
Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS (GF)	72 [] 1028	\$0
HIV / AIDS Working Capital Fund	72 [] 1033	\$309,505,354
Civilian Stabilization Initiative (CS)	72 [] 0305	\$1,151,530
Child Survival and Health Programs (CD)	72 [] 1095	\$16,507,818
Andean Counterdrug Program (formerly ACI) (ACP)	72 19 [] 1154	\$132,722
Food and Nutrition (Legacy)	72 [] 1023	\$2,767,500
Population Planning and Health (Legacy)	72 [] 1024	\$272,442
Education and Human Resources Development (Legacy)	72 [] 1025	\$2,649,022
Property Management Fund	72 [] 4175	\$13,865,818
Working Capital Fund	72 [] 4513	\$45,119,463
Advance Acquisition of Property- Revolving Fund	72 [] 4590	\$46,299
Foreign Service National Separation Liability Trust Fund	72 [] 8342	\$4,504,654
Technical Assistance (TA)	72 [] 8502	\$3,435,454
Gift and Donations	72 [] 8824	\$64,573,468
Ukraine Loan Guarantees Program Account	72 [] 0402	\$0
Loan Guarantees to Israel Financing Account	72 [] 4119	\$599,688,323
MENA Loan Guarantee Financing Account	72 [] 4493	\$172,388,873
Sovereign Guarantee Program Account	72 [] 1560	\$0
Guaranteed Loan Financing Account	72 [] 4464	\$0
Direct Loan Financing Account	72 [] 4463	\$535,245,137
Other Legacy Accounts		
<i>*USAID is the parent for these accounts, but funds are implemented by State and USAID.</i>		
<i>** State is the parent for these accounts, but funds are implemented by State and USAID.</i>		
<i>*** USDA is the parent for these accounts.</i>		
⁽¹⁾ This includes GHP-USAID and GHP-State allocated to USAID		

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Organizational Structure

Proposed Organization for State – USAID Merger







