

Protecting International Assistance

ROOTED IN OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI asserts that charity is an “indispensable expression of [the Church’s] very being” and continues, saying, “Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The concept of ‘neighbor’ is now universalized, yet it remains concrete.” The Catholic Church and its members have a moral responsibility to respond to the needs of our global neighbors. Catholic Relief Services lives out this expression of the Church by working to serve vulnerable communities in over 100 countries around the world.

Catholic teaching has long held that governments, alongside the Church, must play a key role in protecting lives and recognizing the dignity of all members of our global family. Pope Francis states in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, that governments should be “present and active” and “primarily concerned with individuals and the common good.” The Church encourages governments to pursue the common good as it applies to *all* members of our global family, as reflected in Pope Paul VI’s remark that “economically advanced nations have a very grave obligation to help developing peoples.”

A Catholic pro-life approach to U.S. international assistance goes beyond charity. It is a strategic investment that has a profound impact on human life, dignity and global stability. Catholic Relief Services, as the international humanitarian aid and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., stands ready to build on a strong history of successful collaboration with the U.S. government and enhance the Church’s expression of charity and the foundational American values of leadership and service.

RESISTING ATTEMPTS TO IMPAIR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

While international assistance has traditionally received strong bipartisan support, recent actions within Congress and the administration threaten the long-term viability of crucial lifesaving and life-affirming programs. The dedicated efforts of constituent advocates are essential to maintain funding for international assistance through fiscal year 2026. Such efforts help safeguard the leadership role of the U.S. government in promoting safety, security, and prosperity both domestically and globally. This leadership role complements the charitable mission of the Church and CRS works with the U.S. government by implementing federal funding awards that align with our mission and Catholic identity. The Catholic Church is a vital partner to the United States, playing a significant role in development and humanitarian efforts. With its extensive reach and credibility, the Church is crucial in advancing peace and sustainable development globally. CRS is proud to continue our partnership with the U.S. government to enact timely and just policy and legislation and to support the implementation of U.S.-funded international assistance programming.

Stop-Work Orders and Program Terminations

On January 20, 2025, the new administration issued an executive order to review all international assistance and freeze Congressionally appropriated funds, including for lifesaving programs. This led to stop-work orders on most USAID-managed programs and the termination of 83% of USAID-funded programs globally. These terminations and simultaneous delays in the ability for organizations, like CRS, to access funds for continuing programs had immediate and tragic impacts on millions of people worldwide, including halting critical vaccinations, leaving children and pregnant women without nutritional care, and restricting farmers’ ability to plant ahead of growing seasons. By April 19, 2025, CRS received termination notices for 69 poverty-reducing and lifesaving programs in over 30 countries.

Requests for Funding Rescissions

The administration is using a process called rescissions to reduce the U.S.'s leadership role in serving our sisters and brothers and supporting global and domestic stability, security and prosperity. As of April 30, CRS expects the administration will soon request that Congress rescind previously appropriated, or approved, funds for humanitarian aid and development programs. These funds were written into law by Congress to support vulnerable families and communities. Rescissions will be the formal request to cancel these funds.

Normally, rescissions are used to deal with money that a federal agency is unlikely to spend for various reasons. However, the expected rescissions could affect funds intended for use in lifesaving programs implemented by organizations like Catholic Relief Services. In the short term, the rescissions package will freeze implicated funds and restrict changes to related projects for a 45-day period. In the long term, if approved by Congress, it would reduce the overall funds available for lifesaving and poverty-reducing programs, undermining decades of work to establish the U.S. as a leader in serving the global community and fostering a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Reduced Funding for Poverty-Reducing Accounts

During the annual appropriations process, Congress negotiates how to spend U.S. taxpayer dollars. Less than 1% of annual federal spending goes to international assistance, with just half of that directed toward poverty-reducing humanitarian aid and development, yet efforts continue to reduce this amount further. CRS and the USCCB advocate on [priority accounts](#) to ensure the U.S. government provides robust assistance to alleviate suffering and eliminate hunger and poverty around the world.

OUR ASK TO CONGRESS

We urge Congress to oppose rescissions of previously appropriated funds for lifesaving humanitarian and development assistance and to maintain current funding levels for poverty-reducing international assistance in fiscal year 2026 appropriations.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING

For more information on **the stop-work orders and terminations**, view:

- [CRS Statement: Aid Cuts and Lack of Payment Threaten Millions of Lives](#)

For more information on **appropriations** for poverty-reducing accounts, view:

- [CRS/USCCB Chart of Accounts](#)
- [CRS Statement: CRS Urges Congress to Prioritize Critical Poverty-Reducing Humanitarian Aid in FY26 Appropriations](#)
- [Video: The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process](#)

THE RESCISSIONS PROCESS

Each year, Congress allocates discretionary funds, which includes less than 1% of the total U.S. budget, to support poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance programs, such as those implemented by CRS. Article I of the Constitution requires that Congress determines the duration, amount and purpose of appropriated funding. These decisions are codified into law through annual appropriations bills and can only be altered via additional legislation. The rescissions process permits an administration to formally request that Congress cancel previously appropriated funds. Typically, funds requested for rescission include money that agencies are not expected to use. The steps are as follows:

1. **Step 1: The administration requests Congress to cancel certain funds.**
2. **Step 2: Congress reviews the request.** Following a rescissions request, the implicated funds are paused for 45 days while Congress reviews the request and decides whether to enact legislation to cancel the

funds. No adjustments can be made to programs using the implicated funds during this review period. This means that related programs can continue to operate, but with limitations.

3. Step 3: Congress decides whether to approve or reject the request.

4. Step 4: If approved, the funds are canceled; if rejected, the funds remain available.

- a. If Congress approves the rescissions request, both Chambers must agree on a joint resolution specifying which rescissions have been approved. Rescissions requests receive special floor treatment that limits debate and ensures decisions are made within the review period. This joint resolution is considered privileged and requires only a simple majority vote in both chambers.
- b. If Congress rejects the rescissions request, it signals to the administration that the funds should be spent as originally appropriated.

The administration's final option to restrict the use of the funds for which it has requested rescissions is through *impoundment*, where the funds remain available but unspent. If the administration takes this approach it is likely to raise questions about its constitutionality and provoke discussions about the relationship between Congress, the administration and spending authority.

Both rescissions and impoundment can have long-term impacts on funding decisions for critical accounts by reducing the overall pool of funds available each year.

