

CRS Talking Points: U.S. Foreign Aid Freeze

Framing

Begin with gratitude

- Thank you for your time to discuss the urgent need to halt and reverse all terminations of lifesaving and life-affirming humanitarian and development assistance and the need to disperse all Congressionally appropriated foreign assistance funds in a timely manner. The administration's actions to suspend or terminate almost all U.S. foreign assistance programs has been destructive and will cause irreparable harm to millions of our sisters and brothers who need access to lifesaving humanitarian, health and development assistance.

Express gratitude for something your member has done recently related to global poverty or for their service in Congress.

Introduction: Who you are and why you're there

- We are people of faith seeking justice and care for all in our world. We believe assisting people in need and addressing the root causes of global poverty are the right things to do. Moreover, it is the smart thing to do, as addressing global poverty helps foster a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Share about yourself/the group, your work in the state/district and your connection to CRS. Include a personal story of why you support CRS' international humanitarian and development work, including your concern about our human family and why addressing global poverty matters to you.

- **Consider starting your introductions with:** We are constituents from across the [district/state]. Our group consists of [X] amount of people from the following [counties/cities]: _____. We are a part of [X] [dioceses, parishes, universities, high schools, communities]. We have dedicated ourselves to learning about and acting on global issues through our engagement as supporters of Catholic Relief Services and members and leaders of [CRS Chapters/Clubs/Coalitions/Group Name].
- **For new members or returning members that may need a refresher:** Catholic Relief Services is the official international relief and development agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Since CRS' first efforts in 1943 to assist European refugees of World War II, CRS works in more than 100 countries around the world to address the root causes of poverty, promote the sacredness and dignity of human life and help build more just and peaceful societies.

Moving to the Issue

Sample talking points for your conversation

- As Catholics, we believe international assistance is an essential tool to protect life, uphold human dignity and pursue sustainable solutions to the world's toughest challenges.
- Making up less than 1% of the annual federal budget, poverty-reducing foreign assistance is a small yet smart investment to foster economic opportunity and promote peace and security.

- As you know, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development issued stop work orders on almost all international humanitarian aid and development efforts while they reviewed programs to align with the new administration's U.S. foreign policy.
- Some programs received exemption waivers based on recognition of their lifesaving and necessary humanitarian impacts, but no programs—including those providing urgent food aid—had access to critical funds until very recently.
- On February 27, the administration delivered termination notices to thousands of programs around the world, including programs that had previously received waivers under the lifesaving exemption.
- In the days that followed, some lifesaving programs received recession notices, and we were pleased to hear that some waived/underminated programs have begun receiving payment for past work. However, organizations are still waiting for the release of all promised funds.
- We recognize that new administrations have the prerogative to review and align programs to their policy goals. However, suddenly ending almost all lifesaving humanitarian and development assistance has had harmful impacts on human life and dignity and on U.S. national interests.
 - Program terminations:
 - Will lead to more migration, more food insecurity, more global health challenges, and more conflict. This contradicts the administration's stated goal of making the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous.
 - Halted the provision of clean water to infants, food to persecuted religious minorities, basic education for kids, protection of children from trafficking, help for farmers to feed their families, and the distribution of medications to children and others suffering from disease. People are suffering needlessly, and innocent men, women, and children will die.
 - Risk damaging our country's reputation and credibility with other governments and local faith-based agencies or partners, creating opportunities for malign governments and terrorist groups.

The Ask

Please urge the administration to 1) halt and reverse all terminations of lifesaving and life-affirming humanitarian and development assistance until a thorough and transparent review of programs is conducted and 2) disperse all Congressionally appropriated foreign assistance funds in a timely manner.

Share a story about the importance and impact of CRS' programs funded by U.S. international assistance. Consider including details or stories found in the Foreign Aid backgrounder or the [U.S. International Assistance Program Examples document](#).

Discussion

Questions to Ask

- Does [Senator/Representative's name] support engaging the administration to halt and reverse all terminations of active foreign assistance programs and immediately resume the disbursement of Congressionally appropriated foreign assistance funds?
 - If yes: Are you able to reach out to the administration? Or at a minimum, reach out to Congressional Leadership to express concern about these lifesaving issues?
 - If not: Can you share why they do not support that action?
- Regardless of your member's support: What can I do, as a constituent, to continue to work with you/your office on this important issue?

- What information about foreign aid and the work of CRS would be helpful to have as you consider this issue?
- Do you have any questions for us and/or would you like to speak with a CRS staff member about the issue we raised?
 - If requested: David Cronin is the CRS Government Relations manager on budget and appropriations and his contact information will be provided in a follow-up email. (Note: Contact information is listed in the thank you email template found on the CRS Congressional Visits webpage. Be sure to include any questions raised by your member's office or any follow-up needed in the meeting notes you submit to CRS.)

Comments to Raise

- Let your senator/representative know that you—along with CRS—can serve as a resource both in Washington, D.C. and back home in their state/district. Express an interest in continuing to dialogue with them—or their staff—on these and other issues of mutual interest.