

Talking Points:

Building Bipartisan Support for International Assistance

FY26 APPROPRIATIONS AND RESCISSIONS, SUMMER 2025

BEGIN WITH GRATITUDE

Express gratitude for a recent action by your member of Congress or for his/her service in Congress.

“Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the importance of U.S. international humanitarian and development assistance and its contributions to global and U.S. safety, security and prosperity. Before sharing more about us, we wanted to express gratitude for ...”

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Your visits and communication will be most effective in developing relationships with congressional offices and leveraging your influence when you clearly position yourselves within your local context.

Highlight your leadership roles within your community for your member of Congress and congressional staff. Doing so helps foster conversation and demonstrate the breadth and depth of who is present in your group and wider network. As people of faith, constituents, students, leaders, parents and more—your perspectives are unique and important for the office to hear.

Consider the following example of an effective introduction:

- *“We are constituents from across the [district/state]. Our group consists of [X] committed Catholics from the following [counties/cities]. We are a part of [list the dioceses, parishes, universities, high schools and other communities you represent]. We have dedicated ourselves to learning about and acting on global issues as supporters of Catholic Relief Services and are here today to share our concern about international development and humanitarian assistance.*
- *As people of faith committed to justice and compassion, we believe the Catholic Church and its members have a moral responsibility to respond to the needs of our global neighbors. Moreover, we believe that U.S. leadership in international assistance complements the charitable work of the Church by protecting lives and recognizing the dignity of all members of our human family.”*

SHARE YOUR STORY

The most impactful way you can engage your member of Congress is by sharing stories showing why you are passionate about serving your global family. As a community leader, consider the ways you can demonstrate that there are many people in your community/parish/school who also care about issues of global poverty.

Share a personal story: Think about how your faith and life experiences motivate you to care deeply about lifesaving and life-affirming international assistance programs.

Share a story about your community to demonstrate their support: Consider sharing about a recent community event concerning an issue related to global poverty, like hunger or maternal health. Use details to paint a picture of how well attended the event was or how your fellow parishioners donate generously to CRS annually to offer their support of programs that eradicate poverty (i.e., CRS Rice Bowl).

MAKE THE ASK

Ask your members of Congress to:

“Protect international assistance by **maintaining poverty-reducing accounts in fiscal year 2026 appropriations** and **opposing the rescission of funds for lifesaving and life-affirming programs.**”

Share the [CRS/USCCB appropriations chart](#) and how it details the global poverty-reducing priorities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and CRS. Underscore your support for the programs funded by these accounts.

LISTEN, DISCUSS AND GET A COMMITMENT

Listening to your member’s opinions and priorities is equally as important as sharing your own perspectives. You can learn how to best influence your members from what is shared and the words used to convey their views.

The following questions are examples to enhance the conversation in your visit, obtain a commitment on your ask and inform your approach in the future:

- “Does the [Senator/Representative] support maintaining funding levels for poverty-reducing international humanitarian and development assistance in fiscal year 2026?”
 - If yes: “What are their priorities? Do they plan on prioritizing specific accounts for FY26?”
 - If no: “Can you share why they do not support funding these initiatives?”
- “Will the [Senator/Representative] oppose any potential rescissions to previously appropriated international humanitarian and development assistance?”
 - If yes: Based on your relationship and knowledge of your member, continue with one of the following requests:

“Thank you for your willingness to oppose rescissions to international assistance. Can I/we count on you to protect lifesaving humanitarian and development assistance by ...

 - ... talking to members within your party about opposing related rescissions?”
 - ... making a public statement to the media about your opposition to related rescissions?”
 - ... opposing related rescissions when requests are considered by the appropriations committee?” (specific to appropriations committee members)
 - If no: “I/we understand that you have decided on your stance, but I/we ask that you consider what I/we have just shared, when the time comes to make decisions that have the potential to impact global and U.S. security, stability and prosperity.”
- “What information about international assistance and the work of Catholic Relief Services would be helpful to have as you consider these issues during the 119th Congress?”
- “How can I/we continue to work with your office on this important issue?”
- “What are the [Senator/Representative]’s current priorities?”
- “Do you have any questions for us?”
- “Would you be interested in contacting a CRS staff member about the issues we raised?”
 - If requested: “David Cronin is the CRS Government Relations manager on budget and appropriations. We’ll provide his contact information in our follow-up email.”

Note: Contact information is listed in the thank you template found on the [CRS Congressional Visits webpage](#).

EXPRESS GRATITUDE AND CONCLUDE

Close your meeting by thanking the member or staff for their time.

“Thank you for your time and consideration of my/our request that [you/Senator/Representative] protect international assistance by maintaining poverty-reducing accounts in fiscal year 2026 appropriations and opposing the rescission of funds for lifesaving and life-affirming programs.

I/we can serve as a resource in the state/district and look forward to continuing to dialogue with the [Senator/Representative] on these and other issues of mutual interest.”



A partnership between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services