

Eliminating Development Assistance Makes America Less Safe and Less Prosperous

The Development Assistance (DA), Economic Support Fund (ESF), and Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) accounts fund core programs that promote self-reliance, open new markets for U.S. exports, and counter the drivers of authoritarianism, conflict, and violent extremism that increase global instability and humanitarian costs. These investments lay the groundwork for countries to graduate from foreign aid—benefiting both our partners and the American taxpayer. Rescinding or eliminating DA, ESF, and AEECA would halt critical development and civilian security programs, undercut long-term U.S. interests, and violate at least ten bipartisan statutes passed by Congress in recognition that these programs serve vital American foreign policy goals.¹ If these funds are rescinded, America doesn't just forfeit dollars—we forfeit our strategic edge.

How does Development Make America Safer, More Secure, and More Prosperous?

The DA, ESF, and AEECA accounts fund similar activities in slightly different contexts. These budget lines are critical to American safety, security, and prosperity, because they lay the foundation for economic growth, disease prevention, and effective tools for countering threats in countries and regions that are critical for U.S. national interests. These three accounts fund:

- American Schools and Hospitals Abroad
- Anti-terrorism and countering illicit armed groups
- Basic and higher education
- Biodiversity and conservation
- Combating child marriage
- Combating Trafficking in Persons
- Countering China
- Countering Russian influence
- Cybersecurity and digital infrastructure
- Demining
- Democracy and governance
- Disaster surge capacity
- Early childhood development
- Energy security in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe
- Food security and agriculture,
- Fragility prevention
- Microfinance
- Narcotics control
- Ocean freight to deliver supplies to partner countries
- Partnerships with the faith community

¹ Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals Act of 2018; Electrify Africa Act of 2015; Global Child THRIVE Act of 2020; Global Food Security Act of 2016; Global Fragility Act of 2019; Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act of 2017; Save our Seas Act 2.0 of 2020; Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005; Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014; Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018.



- Private sector partnerships
- Regional cooperation and security in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East
- Religious freedom
- Strategic bilateral and regional support, including to Iraq, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, Tibet, and Ukraine
- Trade capacity building
- Victims of torture
- Water security, sanitation, and hygiene
- Youth programs, such as jobs creation

Why isn't A1OF Enough?

The FY26 budget request consolidates bilateral economic assistance into the \$2.9 billion "America First Opportunity Fund" (A1OF)—a flexible fund intended to support partners like India and Jordan, repatriate migrants from the US, counter China, and pursue any other priority deemed to advance national security. Beyond a brief mention in the FY26 request, the administration has provided no clear strategy, criteria, or transparency around how or where these funds will be spent—opening the door to waste, fraud, abuse, and transactional deals that will serve individual interests rather than long-term U.S. goals. This opaque approach undermines the integrity of the State Department and further blurs the line between American diplomacy and personal deal-making.

In stark contrast, the DA account is governed by at least ten bipartisan statutes and provides a transparent, strategic framework for programming. The A1OF lacks Congressional oversight, clear parameters, or justification that warrants the replacement of DA, ESF, or AEECA—U.S. national security requires thoughtful, rules-based tools, not discretionary slush funds. American taxpayers deserve more transparency than this proposed way forward will give them

Actions Congress Can Take

- **Reject Rescissions of Existing Funds:** Vote “no” on any proposed rescissions of funds designated for DA, ESF, and AEECA.
- **Restore and Protect Line Items in Appropriations:** Ensure that the FY26 Department of State appropriations includes **dedicated budget lines** for DA, ESF, and AEECA. These should reflect congressional priorities such as countering authoritarian influence, promoting democratic governance, addressing food insecurity, and investing in global health and economic development.
- **Strengthen Oversight Mechanisms:** Require **reporting requirements and spending plans** for any new or consolidated funds, including the proposed A1OF to ensure alignment with existing statutes and policy frameworks.