



Ranking Member Nita Lowey

SFOPS Subcommittee Statement

Mark up FY 2019 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill

June 13, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Rogers, members of the subcommittee, and our full committee chairman, Mr. Frelingyhusen. I appreciate the majority's efforts to include many of my colleagues' and my priorities in the bill. I also wish to welcome the newest member of our subcommittee, Mr. Rutherford.

I want to express my appreciation to the Majority staff: Craig Higgins, Susan Adams, Clelia Alvarado, David Bortnick, Winnie Chang, Dean Koulouris, Megan O'Donnell and Alex Pinson; as well as my staff: Steve Marchese, Erin Kolodjeski, Matt Washington, Liz Leibowitz, and Monica Pons.

While I appreciate the process, I'm disappointed in the allocation and several policy provisions. It is true that the bill before us avoids the Administration's irresponsible FY 2019 proposal to cut our diplomatic and development efforts. However, we should be doing more at a time of unparalleled refugee emergencies, numerous countries on the brink of famine, and ongoing threats to U.S. national security. With an \$18 billion increase in discretionary spending for FY 2019, we could, and should, be investing more than 1% of the budget on our overseas efforts.

The House allocation for this bill is the same as FY 2018 but should be at least equal to the Senate's increase of \$400 million to recognize that we cannot further risk U.S. leadership abroad by shortchanging foreign aid and diplomacy. We would be more secure and garner more goodwill if, instead of the Republican plan to waste hundreds of millions on Trump's border wall and deportation force, we increased our investments in diplomacy and other security assistance in this bill.

This bill maintains unwavering, bipartisan support and robust funding, in accordance with the new MOU, for our close ally Israel, and provides funding for other critical partners, such as Jordan, and for development goals in many of the world's poorest countries. Further, this bill contains funding for the International Organizations and Programs account, recognizing that U.S. support for UN agencies gives taxpayers the best return on investment.

Unfortunately, this bill contains a number of short-sighted poison pills that would make the world less safe, hurt the most vulnerable, and reduce the effectiveness of U.S. development.

With the increasing number of natural disasters around the world, I had hoped my Republican friends would follow the scientific community on climate change. Sadly, this bill denies reality and would ban U.S. contributions to the Green Climate Fund and continue to be silent on the impact of climate change on poverty and conflict. While this Administration may be comfortable dismantling U.S. leadership on climate change, this strategy is reckless and short-sighted.

In 2018, I find it hard to believe we are still arguing over the importance of international family planning and reproductive health programs. Study after study has shown that access to modern contraceptives not only prevents unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and maternal deaths, it is also key to gender equality and economic growth. But the mark would slash investments in bilateral family planning, codify the Global Gag Rule and its expansion into all global health, and prohibit U.S. contributions to UNFPA. These policies would hurt vulnerable women and severely decrease the efficiency of U.S. aid programs.

I have always tried to keep contentious issues out of this bill. But these riders are poison pills we cannot accept. In the end, Democratic votes will be needed to pass this bill. If Republican Leadership decides this bill must proceed with these riders, I will have to object, offer amendments in Full Committee to strike them, and regrettably, in the end, oppose passage.

In the FY 2018 omnibus, Congress rejected the President's ill-advised international budget by supporting robust investments in development and diplomacy and rejected the dangerous riders before us today. As it stands, this bill would force the U.S. to retreat from its global leadership, and most members in this room know this role would be filled by those who do not share our views or ideals. Democrats cannot support a bill if it would mean turning our backs to the world's most vulnerable women or the looming threat of climate change.

Again, I thank the Chair and look forward to working with my colleagues to improve this bill. I intend to withhold offering any amendments today but will offer what I hope will be bipartisan changes at full committee.