

Support U.S.-Armenia Relations and Related Issues in the FY18 Budget

From: The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Sent By: james.johnson@mail.house.gov
Date: 3/16/2017

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to ask you to sign a letter in support of strengthening American diplomacy and reinforcing ties with Armenia. It is critical, in light of recent events, that we provide assistance to support our allies and stand up for our nation's core democratic principles.

Our requests this year for the FY18 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs appropriation bill hold particular importance given the urgent challenges facing the nations of the Caucasus and Eurasia. American leadership can and must play a vital role in promoting freedom in this strategic region. It is for this reason that we request continued U.S. assistance for Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh, and at-risk minorities in the Middle East, as well as for other foreign aid-related priorities.

To sign the letter below, please contact James Johnson with Rep. Pallone's office at James.Johnson@mail.house.gov or [202-225-4671](tel:202-225-4671) by **COB Tuesday, March 28th**.

Sincerely,

Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.
Co-Chair
Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing to encourage you, as you work with your colleagues in preparing the Fiscal Year 2018 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, to advance U.S. interests by strengthening Armenia's independence, promoting peace in Nagorno Karabakh, and supporting Armenia as a regional safe haven for at-risk Middle East refugees:

Nagorno Karabakh:

We thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership in support of U.S. aid to Nagorno Karabakh, a small but crucial investment in the stability of a strategic region. Over the course of the past 20 years, U.S. aid has provided maternal health care and clean drinking water, and is currently funding the latter stages of a multi-year HALO Trust land mine and unexploded ordnance clearance effort. Parallel to de-mining, there is also a need for water systems as well as rehabilitation centers for children, adults and the elderly with physical and cognitive disabilities.

- **We request that the Subcommittee include language ensuring that not less than \$8 million in Fiscal Year 2018 aid be appropriated to Nagorno Karabakh, including for de-mining, rehabilitation programs, and water supply systems.**

- Consistent with our leadership in advancing the pro-peace mission of the OSCE Minsk Group, and in light of Azerbaijan's arms build-up and escalating aggression against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, we urge the Subcommittee to:

- **Include language ensuring that not less than \$20 million is appropriated to support implementation of the Royce-Engel peace proposals, prioritizing the placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire locator systems and sound-ranging equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact.**

- **Suspend U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan until its government ceases its attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, ends its threat of renewed war, and agrees to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.**

- **Add the following certification requirement to the President's waiver authority under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act: "In the last fiscal year, Azerbaijan has not taken hostile action, either through military force or incitement, including but not limited to threatening pronouncements by government officials toward Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh, and has both stated and demonstrated its commitment to pursuing a lasting peace with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh through solely non-violent means."**

- **Support for Armenia's Independence:**

We recognize the Subcommittee's longstanding leadership in strengthening the U.S.-Armenia partnership, a relationship founded upon a shared commitment to faith, freedom, and democratic values. U.S. assistance has empowered progress in the areas of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, and free enterprise.

Armenia provides a safe haven for refugees, participates in U.S.-led peace-keeping deployments, supports the peaceful resolution of regional disputes, and cooperates, both bilaterally and multilaterally, on political, economic, military, and cultural issues. Our nations have signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement and new U.S. investments, totaling over \$500,000,000, have recently been made by U.S. firms in Armenia's energy and mineral industries.

Blockaded by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia confronts serious challenges to its security and its sovereignty. U.S. economic and military assistance plays a vital role in strengthening Armenia's independence, providing this pro-Western republic with a greater range of strategic options in standing up to regional powers. Military aid enables Armenia's membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace, promotes NATO interoperability, and supports Armenia's participation in peacekeeping operations, including: deployments to countries ranging from Afghanistan (ISAF & Resolute Support Mission) and Iraq (Polish command) to Kosovo (KFOR), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and Mali (MINUSMA) – all since 2004.

Increased Foreign Military Financing (FMF) can modernize the Training Center for Armenia's Peacekeeping Brigade, bringing this facility up to NATO/Partnership for Peace specifications, helping Armenia to deploy a larger number of highly-trained peacekeepers and support the creation of a Role 2 Field Hospital and Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices Engineering unit to support peacekeeping missions. Increased International Military Educational Training (IMET) can expand U.S. training opportunities for Armenian officers, NCOs, and civil servants, advancing U.S.-Armenia defense cooperation goals.

- **We respectfully encourage the Subcommittee to include language ensuring that not less than \$40 million in Fiscal Year 2018 economic aid and \$11 million in military (FMF and IMET) aid is appropriated to Armenia.**

- **Regional Safe Haven for Middle East Refugees:**

More than 20,000 individuals from Syria have sought safety in Armenia, which, despite being one of the poorest nations to accept Syrian refugees, has received only modest levels of U.S. and international relief and resettlement assistance. Armenia has demonstrated its willingness to play a larger role as a regional safe haven for Middle East refugees, including religious minorities, but lacks the financial resources to offer the transition assistance needed by families fleeing violence. Areas of greatest need include short-term housing/rental assistance and support for social and economic integration.

- **We request that the Subcommittee include language ensuring that not less than \$40,000,000 is appropriated to support Armenia's efforts to serve as a regional safe haven for at-risk populations fleeing violence in the Middle East.**

- Thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. We are grateful for your role in strengthening the relationship between the U.S. and Armenia, supporting aid to Nagorno Karabakh, and on all the issues we have raised.

We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,