

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

MONMOUTH

112 Village Center Drive
Freehold, NJ 07728-2510
(732) 780-3035

MERCER

4573 South Broad Street
Hamilton, NJ 08620-2215
(609) 585-7878

OCEAN

405 Route 539
Plumsted, NJ 08514-2303
(609) 585-7878
By Appointment



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

April 28, 2021

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EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

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The Honorable Barbara Lee
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Ranking Member Rogers:

I am grateful for your leadership of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, and for your support of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh).

As you know, I have long been an advocate for Armenia. Over two decades ago, I chaired the first-ever House hearing on H. Res. 398, the Armenian Genocide Resolution. In 2019, after many years, we passed H. Res 296, a subsequent version of the resolution that I co-sponsored.

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we ask you to include the below provisions, which are vital to our continued support for Artsakh's humanitarian needs, including reducing the threat of landmines, helping the survivors of physical and cognitive injuries from landmines, cleaning up unexploded ordinance (UXOs) left over from the recent war, and assisting Armenia's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, rule of law capacity and other institution building. It will also allow us to learn more about Turkey's role in funding Syrian mercenaries in the war in Artsakh, while suspending military support for the Republic of Azerbaijan until it begins playing a helpful role implementing the November 2020 ceasefire.

Accordingly, we ask that you include the following priorities in the FY22 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill:

Humanitarian Assistance to Artsakh

In September 2020, Azeri forces, supported by Turkey, embarked on a devastating war of conquest in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region that caused thousands of casualties, rendered thousands more homeless, and destroyed vital infrastructure. Though the parties agreed to a ceasefire in November 2020, many inhabitants of Artsakh are badly in need of humanitarian

Co-Chairman of the following: Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease • Bi-Partisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus
Coalition for Autism Research and Education • Bi-Partisan Congressional Pro-Life Caucus • Bosnia Caucus • Poland Caucus • Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs
Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking • Vietnam Caucus • Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition • Fragile X Caucus • Spina Bifida Caucus • Hungarian Caucus
Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Caucus • Hong Kong Caucus • Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

assistance for food, housing, medical assistance, and other needs. To address these critical humanitarian needs, I ask that you include the following language:

Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$50 million shall be made available for humanitarian assistance in Artsakh to support food security, housing, medical assistance, and vital infrastructure.

Nagorno Karabakh: Landmines and Landmine Survivors, and clean up UXOs

We need to continue our commitment to landmine, and now UXO, removals a result of the recent war. In addition, we need to renew our support for the rehabilitation of survivors of landmine injuries in Nagorno Karabakh. Like other House colleagues, I am troubled by the recent announcement that the US will end this much-needed assistance. US assistance has already saved lives and facilitated the return of many former minefields to productive use. Accordingly, I request that you maintain our funding for this vital program at \$1.5 million.

In addition, I ask that you include the following language:

We further request that the committee provide robust funding for Nagorno Karabakh-based regional rehabilitation services for survivors of landmine injuries and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Armenian Democracy and Economic Independence

Armenia needs our support to build its fragile rule of law institutions to consolidate the gains following the 2018 “Velvet Revolution.” Accordingly, I ask that you include the following language:

Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$100 million shall be made available for economic, governance, rule of law, and security assistance to Armenia. An increase in funding specifically to the Department of State’s Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia and the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Bureau for Europe and Eurasia should also be made available for these purposes.

Role of the Republic of Turkey in Fomenting the Conflict in the Republic of Artsakh

There are credible reports that the Republic of Turkey funded mercenaries recruited from the Syrian National Army to fight with the Azeri army that invaded Artsakh. UN experts expressed alarm at the devastating consequences for the civilian population, with little prospects of accountability. Accordingly, I ask that you include the following language:

Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$500,000 shall be made available to the Secretary of State for a report that the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees, on the role of Turkey in the recent attack on Artsakh.

Suspend Military Assistance to Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan, along with Turkey, continues to frustrate the prospects for peace in Artsakh, and refuses to repatriate approximately 200 prisoners of war from the conflict. Accordingly, I – similar to other colleagues in the House – ask that you include the following language:

Suspend U.S. military aid, including under Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program, to Azerbaijan until its government ceases its attacks against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and agrees to an equitable resolution of the conflict.

Add the following certification requirement to the President’s waiver authority under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act: " No funds appropriated or otherwise made available under this Act may be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."

Again, thank you for your leadership on the Subcommittee. The provisions highlighted in this letter will help contribute to democratic values in the South Caucasus region and further strengthen the U.S.-Armenia strategic partnership. We appreciate your full and fair consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress