

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Contact: Andy Fisher • 202-224-2079 • Date: 03/13/2008
<http://lugar.senate.gov> • andy_fisher@lugar.senate.gov

Lugar Statement on HIV/AIDS Markup

Following is U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Republican leader Dick Lugar's statement on the Leadership Act Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Committee markup will occur today at 10:15a.m. in S-116 of the US Capitol.

I thank Chairman Biden for working with me and other Republicans to achieve a bipartisan approach to the reauthorization of the Leadership Act Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. I believe that we have an excellent bill before us today that will preserve the best aspects of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and expand U.S. efforts to stem the tide of these diseases worldwide. PEPFAR has provided treatment to an estimated 1.4 million men, women, and children infected with HIV/AIDS in Africa and elsewhere. Before the program began, only 50,000 people in all of sub-Saharan Africa were receiving life-saving, but costly anti-retroviral drugs. Today, three times that many are being treated in Kenya alone. PEPFAR also has focused on prevention programs, with a target of preventing 7 million new HIV infections. As Americans, we should take pride in our nation's efforts to combat these diseases overseas.

Moreover, we should understand that our investments in disease prevention programs have yielded enormous foreign policy benefits during the last five years. PEPFAR has helped to prevent instability and societal collapse in a number of at-risk countries; it has stimulated contributions from other wealthy nations to fight AIDS; it has facilitated deep partnerships with a new generation of African leaders; and it has improved attitudes toward the United States in Africa and other regions. In my judgment, the dollars spent on this program can be justified purely on the basis of the humanitarian results that we have achieved. But the value of this investment clearly extends to our national security and to our national reputation.

I would like to emphasize three points that should guide our deliberations today. First, it is important that Congress move swiftly to reauthorize this program. Partner governments and implementing organizations in the field have indicated that without early reauthorization of the Leadership Act, they may not expand their programs in 2008 to meet PEPFAR goals. Last fall, the Ministers of Health of the twelve African focus countries receiving PEPFAR assistance wrote to us saying: "Without an early and clear signal of the continuity of PEPFAR's support, we are concerned that partners might not move as quickly as possible to fill the resource gap that might be created. Therefore, services will not reach all those who need them.... The momentum will be much greater in 2008 if we know what to expect after 2008."

Second, our bill expands the programmatic flexibility of current law so that U.S. efforts in each country can be tailored to its unique situation. We have removed all programmatic earmarks except for the widely-supported requirement that dedicates 10 percent of funding to orphans and vulnerable children. I have consulted extensively with American officials who are implementing PEPFAR. Most believe that adding new restrictions to the law can limit the flexibility of those charged with implementation in 2009 and beyond. We don't know who that will be, and more importantly, we don't know what the challenges of 2013 will be – though we can probably say with confidence that the landscape will be very different then than it is today.

I understand that some members identify specific concerns or areas that they believe deserve more emphasis. But new provisions must not unduly limit the flexibility of the program. As Senators study the record of PEPFAR to date, I believe they will find that the vast majority of the authorities needed for the next phase of our effort already are in the existing legislation. This flexibility is preserved in the House bill and in the bill before us today.

Third, the bill we are debating is an authorization bill subject to the annual budget and appropriations process. It is meant to establish policy and the overall parameters of spending on the PEPFAR program. The \$50 billion figure is based on what we believe can be spent efficiently and effectively in the years ahead. It presumes that funding will gradually increase over the coming five-year period. Of the \$50 billion authorized, \$5 billion has been reserved for malaria and \$4 billion has been reserved for tuberculosis. I understand that some members would spend less than \$50 billion, while others would spend more. But this is a reasonable target that has emerged from good faith negotiations between Congress and the White House. I believe it will maximize the humanitarian and foreign policy benefits of the PEPFAR program.

We have an opportunity today to establish policy on a bipartisan basis that will be a triumph for the United States. We have the opportunity to save lives on a massive scale and preserve the fabric of numerous fragile societies. I ask my colleagues to work together for this result. I thank the Chairman, and look forward to moving this bill to the floor.

###