

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2985

To establish a public diplomacy international exchange program to be known as the Ambassador's Fund for Strategic Exchanges, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 19, 2009

Mr. MORAN of Virginia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To establish a public diplomacy international exchange program to be known as the Ambassador's Fund for Strategic Exchanges, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ambassador’s Fund
5 for Strategic Exchanges Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) The United States has a strategic national
9 interest in improving its image around the world,

1 given the historically low levels of public opinion to-
2 ward the United States in many countries.

3 (2) International exchange programs have been
4 proven to be one of the most beneficial and cost-ef-
5 fective means by which to promote mutual under-
6 standing between citizens of the United States and
7 citizens of other countries and to advance United
8 States national interests through closer working
9 partnerships with leaders around the world.

10 (3) Prominent world leaders during recent dec-
11 ades, such as Tony Blair and Anwar Sadat, have
12 deepened their friendship and openness to the
13 United States through international exchanges, and
14 many persons who previously had highly anti-Amer-
15 ican opinions have changed their views after partici-
16 pating in exchange programs organized by the
17 United States Government.

18 (4) United States exchange programs, such as
19 the International Visitors Program, make a tremen-
20 dous impact in the lives of those individuals who
21 participate and consistently are ranked by public di-
22 plomacy experts as some of the most effective public
23 diplomacy programs.

24 (5) The International Visitors Program of the
25 United States Department of State organizes ex-

1 change programs for anticipated future leaders in
2 their countries who travel to the United States for
3 programs generally of three weeks, and it produces
4 very positive results among its target audience.

5 (6) Another key target audience for United
6 States exchanges is not addressed by the Inter-
7 national Visitors Program; this group includes cur-
8 rent political, economic, and civil society leaders,
9 often from less privileged backgrounds, who have not
10 traveled to the United States previously.

11 (7) Such persons currently in leadership posi-
12 tions in their countries are often unable to leave
13 their jobs for a period of three weeks, given the
14 press of their responsibilities, and United States em-
15 bassies administering exchange programs not infre-
16 quently find that identified candidates for Inter-
17 national Visitor Program exchanges decline partici-
18 pation because of this fact.

19 (8) A number of United States embassies, in-
20 cluding the embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, have piloted
21 country-specific, embassy-initiated exchange pro-
22 grams targeted to such groups of current leaders
23 who have never traveled to the United States. These
24 programs generally last from 5-7 program days and
25 bring together 8-10 participants from a country who

1 work on similar issues but have not worked with
2 each other before. Some of these programs have
3 been coordinated with the Voluntary Visitors Divi-
4 sion of the International Visitors Office in the Bu-
5 reau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the De-
6 partment of State.

7 (9) Such programs have proven highly effective
8 in having an immediate impact on current leaders
9 working in key sectors and in helping advance
10 United States interests such as greater democratiza-
11 tion, observance of human rights, economic reform
12 and poverty alleviation, empowerment of women and
13 girls, and improved cooperation with the United
14 States in confronting threats from organized crime,
15 narco-trafficking, and terrorist groups. These pro-
16 grams also promote greater cooperation across sec-
17 tors, agencies, and regions within a country, given
18 the shared experience the exchange visitors have to-
19 gether during their trip to the United States.

20 (10) A key element of the success of these pilot
21 exchanges is that they are conceived and developed
22 in individual embassies overseas, keyed to specific
23 interests of the United States in each country.

24 (11) However, these pilot exchanges currently
25 have not been replicated widely within the Depart-

1 ment of State, being confined to only a few United
2 States embassies around the world, because there
3 are no Department-wide programmatic guidelines or
4 central funding for these exchange programs.

5 **SEC. 3. AMBASSADOR'S FUND FOR STRATEGIC EXCHANGES.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State shall es-
7 tablish in the Voluntary Visitors Division of the Office of
8 International Visitors in the Bureau of Educational and
9 Cultural Affairs a program to conduct public diplomacy
10 exchanges, to be known as the “Ambassador’s Fund for
11 Strategic Exchanges”, to bring political, economic, civil
12 society, and other leaders to the United States for short-
13 term exchange visits in order to advance key United States
14 strategic goals.

15 (b) COORDINATION.—Under the program established
16 pursuant to subsection (a), each United States embassy
17 and the Office of International Visitors shall coordinate
18 to develop the short-term exchange visits described in such
19 subsection.

20 (c) NUMBER AND DURATION.—The short-term ex-
21 change visits shall be for groups of up to between eight
22 and ten participants, and shall be for visits of five to eight
23 days.

24 (d) AREAS OF FOCUS.—The key United States stra-
25 tegic goals referred to in subsection (a) may include the

1 following, as determined by the individual United States
2 embassy and the Office of International Visitors:

3 (1) Strengthening democracy and human
4 rights.

5 (2) Advancing the rule of law.

6 (3) Strengthening cooperation in the fight
7 against terrorism, organized crime, and drug traf-
8 ficking.

9 (4) Reducing poverty and promoting economic
10 reform.

11 (5) Empowering women and girls.

12 (6) Broadening political and economic partici-
13 pation to include traditionally excluded groups.

14 (7) Other embassy and Office of International
15 Visitors-identified priority purposes.

16 (e) SELECTION.—The Bureau of Educational and
17 Cultural Affairs shall solicit proposals from United States
18 embassies for short-term exchange visits and select among
19 them on a competitive basis.

20 (f) COST-SHARING AND FUNDING.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with para-
22 graphs (2) and (3), as appropriate, the Bureau of
23 Educational and Cultural Affairs and the United
24 States embassies shall engage in cost-sharing in car-
25 rying out the short-term exchange visits.

1 (2) BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL
2 AFFAIRS.—From amounts authorized to be appro-
3 priated to carry out this Act pursuant to section 4
4 and from amounts made available for the regular
5 program budget of the Voluntary Visitors Division,
6 such sums as may be necessary are authorized to be
7 appropriated to the Bureau of Educational and Cul-
8 tural Affairs to carry out the short-term exchange
9 visits. Such visits shall be treated in the same man-
10 ner as Voluntary Visitor trips are treated.

11 (3) UNITED STATES EMBASSIES.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—From amounts author-
13 ized to be appropriated to carry out this Act
14 and from amounts made available for the public
15 diplomacy budgets of United States embassies,
16 such sums as may be necessary are authorized
17 to be appropriated to such embassies to carry
18 out the short-term exchange visits. Allowable
19 expenses associated with such visits include air-
20 fares, pre-departure expenses, and such other
21 expenses as are needed to allow individuals to
22 travel to the United States to participate in
23 such visits.

24 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in
25 this section may be construed as imposing any

1 restrictions, such as restrictions included in the
2 Foreign Affairs Manual of the Department of
3 State, on the ability of United States embassies
4 to pay for airfares of individuals participating
5 in the short-term exchange visits.

6 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appro-
8 priated to the Secretary of State such sums as may be
9 necessary to carry out this Act.

10 (b) ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS.—In addition to amounts
11 authorized to be appropriated pursuant to subsection (a),
12 there are authorized to be appropriated \$1,500,000 to the
13 International Visitors Program for Professional and Cul-
14 tural Exchanges for short-term exchange visits conducted
15 under the auspices of the Ambassador’s Fund for Stra-
16 tegic Exchanges. Such amounts shall be administered by
17 the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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