

EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support of expanded embryonic stem cell research and to thank President Obama for reversing the Federal limitations imposed on stem cell research by the previous administration. I also thank my colleagues Senators HARKIN, SPECTER, FEINSTEIN, HATCH, and REID, for their ongoing leadership on this issue.

Research on human embryonic stem cells began in 1998 and is still only in its infancy. In this short time, researchers have made great strides in stem cell research, discovering the scientific potential of embryonic stem cells and their ability to treat and cure diseases that affect patients and families across our country. Unfortunately, however, the true potential of embryonic stem cell research has not yet been realized. For the past 8 years, Federal funding has been limited to the study of embryonic stem cell lines derived before August 9, 2001, significantly hampering the ability of researchers to effectively study the full potential of these cells. Political issues, funding considerations, and the limited pipeline of talented researchers specializing in this new field have slowed the development of a robust research community focused on stem cell investigation.

Stem cells could be a boon to medical research and treatment in a variety of ways: as replacement cells for those cells that have been lost or destroyed because of disease; as tools for studying early events in human development; as test systems for new drug therapies; and as vehicles to deliver genes that could correct defects. The more that is learned about embryonic stem cells, the better scientists can assess their full therapeutic potential and that of other stem cell types.

This research is so critical to the scientific understanding of diseases, therapies, and cures that impact millions of Americans. Embryonic stem cells could lead to treatments for diseases that afflict up to 100 million Americans, including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, spinal cord injuries, and so many other debilitating conditions.

Now, I have always been a supporter of stem cell research and have long recognized the importance of this critical research to the scientific community. However, stem cell research became personal for me in 2007 when my oldest granddaughter Elle was diagnosed with diabetes. But my family is not alone in either struggling with the disease of juvenile diabetes or recognizing the importance of stem cell research to a potential cure for the disease. Mimi Silverman of Bedford, NH, speaks eloquently about what it is like to be the parent of a diabetic. Her daughter Abby, who is now 30, was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 7. Mimi knows about the toll that diabetes takes on the entire family and she

talks about the psychological effects on her family, not knowing what each day will bring. She describes the disease as a ticking timebomb in which there is always uncertainty and underlying apprehension.

A few years ago, Abby, Mimi's daughter, was 2 weeks away from getting married. She was living alone in Minneapolis, 1,500 miles away from her fiancé and her family. She was alone in her apartment and because of diabetes, she fell unconscious. Luckily, her fiancé called. He realized that Abby was incoherent and he was able to contact the apartment manager to unlock the door and get her help. But had her fiancé not called when he did, in all likelihood, Abby would not be alive today. Mimi is now a leading advocate in New Hampshire in support of stem cell research.

Laura Clark, from Antrim, NH, is 25 years old. Five years ago she was in the final year of her nursing studies at the University of New Hampshire. Unfortunately, she was in a tragic car accident on the way to the movies. As a result of the collision, Laura's neck was crushed and after two weeks in intensive care and 11 weeks in rehabilitation, Laura recovered but is now quadriplegic. While her spirit is strong, her life has changed dramatically. The accident not only affected Laura, but of course her family was affected as well. Her mother Kathy quit her job to stay home to take care of Laura, and her younger sister, who was in high school at the time, was not able to go on to college. Laura doesn't give up the hope that some day, as a result of stem cell research, a scientist will discover a way to help her regain her independence.

Stem cell research holds the potential to help Elle, to help Abby, and to help Laura, and so many others in New Hampshire and across this country. I thank President Obama for recognizing the importance of this issue and for providing an opportunity for us to reverse the stem cell policy that has slowed the pace of medical research and hindered the development of therapeutic treatments for medical conditions ranging from diabetes and spinal cord injuries to Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. I now look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and the new administration to ensure continued support of stem cell research. Through increased funding and ensuring that moral and ethical guidelines for research are established in this growing field, I am hopeful that the scientific community will continue with crucial stem cell innovations that will positively affect the lives of those three young women whom I talked about and so many people across this country.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS ACT

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, last week when considering H.R. 1105, the

Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009, I filed technical corrections to the table of congressionally directed spending items contained in the explanatory statement offered by the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives which accompanies the bill H.R. 1105.

I wish to add the following technical correction to the joint explanatory statement that accompanied H.R. 1105:

On page H2368 of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of February 23, 2009, the words "Perkins Career and Technical Education Act" should read "Higher Education Opportunity Act" and the Senate requesters associated with this item should be changed to "Conrad; Domenici; Dorgan."

FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, which President Obama signed yesterday, contains \$36.6 billion in discretionary budget authority for the Department of State and Foreign Operations, which is the same amount approved by the Appropriations Committee in July 2008.

This represents a \$1.6 billion decrease from former President Bush's budget request of \$38.2 billion. I repeat—this legislation is \$1.6 billion below what former President Bush recommended in his budget.

It is a \$3.8 billion increase from the fiscal year 2008 enacted level, not counting supplemental funds, and \$968 million above the fiscal year 2008 level including fiscal year 2008 supplemental and fiscal year 2009 bridge funds.

The State and Foreign Operations portion of the omnibus does not contain any congressional earmarks. It does, as is customary and appropriate, specify funding levels for authorized programs, certain countries, and international organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank.

I want to thank Chairman INOUE, President Pro Tempore BYRD, and Ranking Member COCHRAN for their support throughout this protracted process. And I want to thank Senator GREGG, who as ranking member of the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee worked with me to produce this bipartisan legislation that was reported by the Appropriations Committee with only one dissenting vote.

It was imperative that we enacted this legislation. The alternative of a year-long continuing resolution would have been devastating for the operations of the State Department and our embassies, consulates and missions around the world, and for programs that support a myriad of United States foreign policy interests and that protect the security of the American people. Many Senators on both sides of the aisle were encouraged that Senator Clinton was nominated for and confirmed to be Secretary of State. If we

want her to succeed we must provide the tools to do so. This legislation supports her highest priority of rebuilding the civilian capabilities of our government.

The omnibus provides \$7.8 billion for Department of State operations, a decrease of \$274 million below former President's Bush's request and \$1.2 billion above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level, not including supplemental funds. Counting emergency funds provided in fiscal year 2008 for personnel, operations and security costs in Iraq and Afghanistan, the omnibus provides a 5.6-percent increase.

These increases are attributed to a major investment in personnel, primarily to replace worldwide positions that were redirected to Iraq and invest particularly in countries of growing importance in South Asia. The omnibus supports the request of 500 additional positions, much of which will help posts left depleted, some by 25 percent, due to positions shifting to Iraq during the last 5 years. In addition, the omnibus recommends \$75 million for a new initiative to train and deploy personnel in postconflict stabilization. These critical investments would have been lost under a year-long continuing resolution.

The omnibus provides \$1.7 billion for construction of new secure embassies and to provide security upgrades to existing facilities, which is \$178 million below former President Bush's request. He had proposed a 41-percent increase which we did not have the funds to support. But an increase of \$99.5 million, or 13 percent, above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level is provided considering the significant threats our embassies faced last year alone, from Yemen to Belgrade. Even this lesser increase for embassy construction and security upgrades would be lost under a year-long continuing resolution.

Specifically, the omnibus provides \$4.24 billion for diplomatic and consular programs, which funds State Department personnel. This is an increase of \$464 million, or 12 percent, above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level and \$42 million above the President's request. This funds a major investment in personnel to increase language training and expand the number of personnel in regions of growing importance. Senators on both sides of the aisle have strongly endorsed this investment, but it would not be funded under a continuing resolution.

In fact, under a year-long continuing resolution the State Department would not have the resources to fund the staff currently serving at 267 posts overseas, due to exchange rate losses and the increased cost of security overseas. That means the United States would have even less representation than we do now, which none of us here would find acceptable.

The omnibus provides \$1.1 billion for worldwide security protection for non-capital security upgrades, an increase of \$355 million above the fiscal year

2008 enacted level and \$46 million below the request. This account funds all the Diplomatic Security agents at every post worldwide, armored vehicles, and training—all investments which, again, have bipartisan support. The increases would fund additional personnel for protection at high-threat embassies and oversight of security contractors in Iraq, Afghanistan and Israel-West Bank. This would not be possible under a continuing resolution.

Senators of both parties have expressed strong support for expanding international exchange programs, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries. The omnibus provides \$538 million for education and cultural exchanges, which is \$15.5 million above the President's request and an increase of \$36.6 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. Those additional funds would be lost under a continuing resolution at the moment when the U.S. has the greatest opportunity to reintroduce our country, our people, and our values to the rest of the world.

The same is true of public diplomacy. The omnibus provides \$394.8 million for the State Department's public diplomacy activities, including outreach, media and programs in embassies to develop relationships with people in host countries. This is \$33.9 million above the fiscal year 2008 level, which would not be available under a continuing resolution.

The omnibus provides \$1.7 billion for construction of new secure embassies and maintenance of existing facilities, a \$280 million increase above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level and \$83 million below the President's request. Of this amount, \$801 million is for embassy maintenance, \$40 million less than the request and \$46 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level.

The omnibus provides \$770 million for planning, design and construction of new embassies and office buildings worldwide, \$178 million below the request and \$99 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. Any Senator who has traveled abroad has seen the need to replace insecure and old embassies. There is already a long waiting list, and it would be even longer under a continuing resolution.

Former President Bush's budget underfunded the U.S. assessed contribution to U.N. Peacekeeping in fiscal year 2009 by assuming a reduction in every mission except Sudan. That was pie in the sky. The cost of most of these missions is increasing, not decreasing. The omnibus provides \$1.5 billion for U.N. Peacekeeping, an increase of \$295 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level and \$20 million above the President's request. However, compared to the total amount enacted in fiscal year 2008, the bill is \$173 million below the operating level in fiscal year 2008 including supplemental funds. These are costs we are obligated to pay by treaty. They support the troops of other nations in Darfur, the Congo, Lebanon, Haiti, and a dozen other countries.

The omnibus provides \$1.5 billion for contributions to international organizations, the same as the President's request and \$186 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. The account funds the U.S. assessed dues to 47 international organizations, including NATO, IAEA, OECD, the U.N. and others for which, as a member of the organization, the U.S. is obligated by treaty to contribute. We either pay now or we pay later.

The omnibus provides \$709.5 million for the Broadcasting Board of Governors, an increase of \$39.5 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level and \$10 million above the former President Bush's budget request. This includes funding for languages which the former administration proposed to eliminate in fiscal year 2009, such as Russian, Georgian, Kazak, Uzbek, Tibetan and the Balkans, where freedom of speech remains restricted and broadcasting programs are still necessary to provide unbiased news.

For USAID, the omnibus provides \$808.6 million for operating expenses, \$41.4 million above former President Bush's request and \$179 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. This continues efforts begun last year to address the serious staff shortage at USAID, but under a continuing resolution USAID's staff problems would continue to worsen. It would not be able to hire additional staff for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or for other posts where there is not sufficient oversight of contracting and procurement. It is a crisis situation that I and Senator GREGG are determined to fix.

For bilateral economic assistance, the omnibus provides a total of \$17.1 billion, \$1.3 billion below former President Bush's request and \$623.3 million above the fiscal year 2008 level. We received requests from most Senators—Democrats and Republicans—for funding from within this account, totaling far more than we could afford. A continuing resolution would have made it impossible to fund many, if not most, of those requests.

A good example is global health. The omnibus provides \$7.1 billion for global health and child survival, an increase of \$757 million above the request and \$737 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. A continuing resolution would be devastating for these life-saving programs.

A total of \$495 million is provided for child survival and maternal health, an increase of \$125 million above former President Bush's request and \$49 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. These funds are for programs that directly decrease child and maternal mortality from preventable diseases, like malaria, polio and pneumonia. Under a continuing resolution USAID would not be able to expand its malaria control programs to other countries in Africa with a high incidence of malaria, which kills a million people, mostly African children, every year.

The omnibus provides \$300 million for safe water programs, including increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation, which is a key factor in improving public health.

Former President Bush proposed a steep cut in funding for family planning and reproductive health programs, even though they are the most effective means of reducing unwanted pregnancies and abortions. The omnibus, instead, provides a total of \$545 million from all accounts for family planning and reproductive health including \$50 million for the U.N. Population Fund, which is \$82 million above the fiscal year 2008 level. A continuing resolution would eliminate those additional funds, and the number of unintended pregnancies and abortions would increase.

The omnibus provides a total of \$5.5 billion for programs to combat HIV/AIDS, \$388 million above former President Bush's request and \$459 million above the fiscal year 2008 level. Of this amount, \$600 million is provided for the global fund to fight HIV/AIDS, which is \$400 million above the request. Additionally within the total, \$350 million is provided for USAID programs to combat HIV/AIDS, which is \$8 million above the request.

These additional funds, which pay for life-sustaining antiretroviral drugs, prevention and care programs, would be lost under a continuing resolution, to the detriment of 1 million people who would receive life-saving treatment this year. With this funding 2 million additional HIV infections would be prevented this year. Instead of 10 million lives we are saving today, we have the opportunity to save 12 million people. We have the opportunity with this bill to save 1 million more orphans or vulnerable children who are either infected with HIV or have been orphaned because a parent died from HIV/AIDS. Why would we not make this investment this year?

The development assistance account funds energy and environment programs, microcredit programs, private enterprise, rule of law, trade capacity, and many other activities that Senators on both sides of the aisle support. The omnibus provides \$1.8 billion for development assistance which is \$161 million above former President Bush's request and \$176 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level.

The omnibus provides \$350 million for international disaster assistance, \$52 million above the request and \$30 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level, excluding supplemental funds. These funds enable the United States to put its best face forward when disaster strikes, as it did with the tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan, floods in Central America, and famine in Africa.

The omnibus provides \$875 million for the Millennium Challenge Corporation. This is \$1.3 billion below the request and \$669 million below the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. This reflects the

view of the House and Senate that the Congress supports the MCC but wants to see a slowdown in new compacts, while \$7 billion in previously appropriated funds are disbursed, and while the new administration decides how it wants to fund the MCC in the future. The agreement provides sufficient funds to continue current operations and to commence two new compacts of \$350 million each.

For the Peace Corps, the omnibus provides \$340 million, which is \$9 million above the fiscal year 2008 level. Those additional funds would have been lost under a continuing resolution.

The omnibus provides \$875 million for international narcotics control and law enforcement, which is \$327 million below the request and \$321 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. Those additional funds for programs in Latin America, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and many other countries would be lost under a continuing resolution.

There is a total of \$405 million for continued support of the Merida Initiative, including \$300 million for Mexico and \$105 million for the countries of Central America. The fiscal year 2008 supplemental included \$400 million and \$65 million, respectively. We are all increasingly alarmed by the spread of drug-related violence and criminal gangs in Mexico, but under a continuing resolution there would be nothing for the Merida Initiative.

Migration and refugee assistance is funded at \$931 million, which is \$167 million above former President Bush's request and \$108 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. That \$108 million would be lost under a continuing resolution. This amount is already \$557 million below what was provided in fiscal year 2008 including supplemental and fiscal year 2009 bridge funds. These funds are used for basic care and protection of refugees and internally displaced persons, whose numbers are not expected to decrease this year.

The omnibus provides \$4.9 billion for military assistance and peacekeeping operations, \$173 million below former President Bush's request but \$212.6 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. The omnibus assumes \$170 million provided in the fiscal year 2008 supplemental as fiscal year 2009 bridge funds for military assistance to Israel, making the total amount for Israel equal to the President's request, \$2.55 billion. The additional \$212.6 million for other important bilateral relationships would be lost under a continuing resolution.

For contributions to the multilateral development institutions, which we owe by treaty, the bill provides \$1.8 billion. That is \$503 million below the former President's request and \$251 million above the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. A continuing resolution would have put us another \$251 million in arrears, in addition to the arrears we already owe.

The omnibus provides the amounts requested by the former President for the Export-Import Bank, an increase of \$26.5 million above fiscal year 2008. By not passing this legislation, these additional resources would not have been available to make U.S. businesses competitive in the global marketplace. At this time of economic downturn at home we should be doing everything we can to support U.S. trade.

These are the highlights of the fiscal year 2009 State and Foreign Operations portion of the omnibus that passed by a vote of 62–38. It contains funding to meet critical operational costs and programmatic needs which support U.S. interests and protect U.S. security around the world.

A handful of our friends in the minority spent days criticizing the omnibus because it contains earmarks. Apparently they would have preferred that unnamed, unelected bureaucrats make all the decisions about the use of taxpayer dollars. In fact, the total amount of the \$410 billion omnibus that Members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans—have earmarked for schools, fire and police departments, roads, bridges, hospitals, scientific research, universities and other organizations and programs in their states and districts which would not otherwise receive funding, is less than 1 percent. That is what the aggrieved speeches were about. A whopping 1 percent.

Some Senators complained that the omnibus—all but a small fraction of which would fund the budget requests of former President Bush—is more than we can afford. Those are the same Senators who, year after year, rubberstamped billions and billions of borrowed dollars to fund an unnecessary war and reconstruction programs in Iraq that were fraught with waste and abuse.

Some say that the intervention of the Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act is why they opposed the omnibus. Regarding the Department of State and Foreign Operations, 99.6 percent of the omnibus has no correlation whatsoever to what was funded by the Recovery Act. This portion of the omnibus funds all of the United States' activities overseas. All of the key new investments I have described would not have been possible under a year-long continuing resolution.

The funding for State and Foreign Operations in the omnibus amounts to about 1 percent of the total budget of this country. However one views the Economic Recovery Act, the damage that a year-long continuing resolution would have caused to the functions of our embassies, consulates and missions, and to the foreign service officers who serve the American people around the world, would have been devastating. The damage to programs would be measured in lives.

We have seen the image of our country battered beyond recognition. The values our country was founded on were ignored, ridiculed, and diminished. Democrats and Republicans

alike recognize that the United States needs to reinvigorate its engagement in the world, particularly through rebuilding alliances and using diplomacy more effectively. The omnibus puts our money where our mouths are. The alternative would have been to retract, and to invite others to fill the vacuum. That might save money in the short term, but it would have cost us dearly in the future.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am glad Republican Senators abandoned their efforts to filibuster the nomination of the Deputy Attorney General. It was only after the majority leader filed for cloture that the Republican caucus came to the conclusion that such a maneuver was futile. I thank the majority leader for scheduling the debate and votes for the President's nominees to serve as Deputy Attorney General and Associate Attorney General. They have now been confirmed by the Senate.

The Republican minority, nonetheless, insisted on 7 hours of debate on the Deputy Attorney General nomination this week before allowing the vote. That was longer than the debate they demanded on the nomination of the Attorney General of the United States. I spoke yesterday to open the debate, as did the ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator SPECTER, who also supported the nomination. We both spoke, again, today to close the debate.

I followed the debate, and have responded by way of additional statements to correct the record on the Deputy Attorney General nominee.

Now I would like us to take a step back and see what has occurred. Yesterday, the Republican minority insisted on 5 hours of debate on the Ogden nomination. In fact, the Republican opposition devoted less than 1 hour to comment about the Ogden nomination. The rest of their time they consumed with criticism of the President's budget and policy initiatives to help the country recover from the economic crisis. I am not saying that the budget discussion is unimportant. I may not agree with their criticism, but the budget is certainly a topic about which Senators may wish to make statements. My point is that after delaying debate on the President's nomination for the No. 2 official at the Justice Department for 2 weeks, and demanding extended debate, they failed to use the time to discuss the nomination. Instead, they talked about unrelated issues.

In fact, they were so uninterested in debating the nomination that by the time Senator INHOFE came to the floor, all Republican time had been used on other discussions. As a courtesy, we made available time from the Democratic side that should have been used by supporters of the nomination. We accommodated the Senator from Oklahoma so that he could speak against the nomination.

Today, an additional 2 hours was demanded by the Republican majority to debate the Ogden nomination further before they would allow a vote. Of course, those Republicans who opposed the nomination used not 1 minute of time to debate it today—not 1 minute.

Indeed, of the time that the Republican minority insisted was necessary before the Senate could vote on the Ogden nomination, more than an hour was wasted in quorum calls with no speakers at all yesterday and approximately 1 hour was spent by opposition speakers—not 7 hours, not 3 hours, barely 1 hour. The Ogden debate could easily have been handled with the opposition taking an hour or an hour and one-half to speak.

I wish instead of this campaign to delay and obstruct the President, the minority would work with us on the consideration of matters of critical importance to the American people. I will note just one current example. This morning, the New York Times had a front-page story about financial frauds. Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee reported an antifraud matter to the Senate. The Leahy-Grassley Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act, S.386, needs to be considered without delay. It is an important initiative to confront the fraud that has contributed to the economic and financial crisis we face, and to protect against the diversion of the Federal efforts to recover from this downturn.

As the New York Times story demonstrates, improving our efforts to hold those accountable for the mortgage and financial frauds that have contributed to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression is most timely. We need to do better, and our bipartisan bill, which has the support of the U.S. Department of Justice, can make a difference. In addition to Senator GRASSLEY, I thank Senator KAUFMAN, Senator KLOBUCHAR, Senator SCHUMER, and Senator SHELBY for working with us and for their interest in this important measure.

Our legislation is designed to reinvigorate our capacity to investigate and prosecute the kinds of frauds that have undermined our economy and hurt so many hard-working Americans. It provides the resources and tools needed for law enforcement to aggressively enforce and prosecute fraud in connection with bailout and recovery efforts. It authorizes \$245 million a year over the next couple of years for fraud prosecutors and investigators. With this funding, the FBI can double the number of mortgage fraud taskforces nationwide, and target the hardest hit areas. It includes resources for our U.S. Attorneys' Offices, as well as the Secret Service, the HUD Inspector General's Office and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. It includes important improvements to our fraud and money laundering statutes to strengthen prosecutors' ability to confront fraud in mortgage lending practices, to protect TARP funds, and to uncover fraudulent

schemes involving commodities futures, options and derivatives as well as making sure the Government can recover the ill-gotten proceeds from crime.

Our bipartisan measure was favorably reported on a voice vote by the Judiciary Committee on March 5. I have been trying to get a time agreement to consider the measure ever since. The Senate should consider and pass it without delay. We can help make a difference for all Americans. Instead of wasting our time in quorum calls when no one is speaking, or demanding multiple hours of debates on nominations that can be discussed in much less time before being confirmed, let us work on matters that will help get us out of the economic ditch that we have inherited from the policies of the last administration, and let us begin to work together on behalf of the American people.

EL SALVADOR ELECTION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this Sunday the people of El Salvador will go to the polls to elect a new President. As one Senator who has followed developments in that country and observed with concern the steady rise in violent crime, including organized crime and drug trafficking, I hope that whoever wins the election makes reforming the police and justice system a priority.

United States assistance to El Salvador is a small fraction of what it was during the 1980s, but in 2006 El Salvador signed a 5-year compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The compact totals \$461 million, and focuses on road construction, economic and social development in the area of the country bordering Honduras that bore the brunt of the worst consequences of the civil war.

I had hoped that a portion of the MCC compact would be used to strengthen El Salvador's dysfunctional judicial system, both to help reduce violent crime and attract foreign investment, but unfortunately that was not the decision of the Salvadoran Government or the Bush administration at the time. Nevertheless, the MCC compact does seek to improve the lives of some of El Salvador's poorest communities and I support it.

Recently, I have been concerned with reports that some Salvadorans involved in the election campaign may have asserted that if the opposition party candidate wins the election the United States will stop funding the MCC compact. Such an assertion, presumably to intimidate voters, would be completely false.

We take no position on the Salvadoran election. It is entirely for the people of El Salvador to decide who their next President will be. The MCC compact will continue regardless of who wins on Sunday, as long as the policies of the new Government, of whichever party, are consistent with