



**Communicating for America
Communicating for Agriculture
Communicating for Seniors**

Dear Senator,

As the House considers its spending bill to complete funding for FY 2011 (H.R. 1), I write in support of State Department international exchange programs, a smart and cost-effective investment in American global and economic competitiveness and national security. State Department exchange programs are currently being funded at \$635 million in the FY 2010 continuing resolution, constituting 0.0001% of the federal budget. Yet the economic and national security benefits exchange programs return to the United States far outweigh this relatively modest expenditure.

H.R. 1 would impose a 21 per cent reduction in funding for these proven programs, to \$501.3 million from the FY 2010 level of \$635 million. As the debate on federal funding for the remainder of FY 2011 moves forward, I urge you to support maintaining the FY 2010 funding level for exchanges.

The State Department budget supports the two-way exchange of more than one million students and scholars each year, and the economic benefits the U.S. receives from such exchanges- both direct and indirect- are staggering. For example, more than 400 EducationUSA advising centers around the world supported a flow of 690,923 foreign students to study in the U.S. These advising centers received an appropriation of \$12.9 million last year, while foreign students studying in the U.S. spent nearly \$20 billion in our country before returning home (according to the Institute of International Education's 2010 Open Doors report and NAFSA: Association of International Educators). The State Department exchanges budget not only helps talented students from all over the world receive an American education and experience the real America, but it also directly provides significant economic benefits to communities all over our country.

In addition, State Department exchange programs provide opportunities for Americans to increase their global fluency, and thus increase their competitiveness in an economically interdependent world. Nearly every aspect of the economy has taken on an international dimension, and international competency has quickly become a prerequisite for business success. International exchange programs provide vital opportunities for Americans of all ages to interact with their global peers, live in countries all over the world, and learn the language and cultural skills necessary to do business effectively in the 21st century.

State Department exchange programs are also an integral component of our national security. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has said, "My view is the American [national security] toolbox should contain something other than hammers." Exchange programs provide critical opportunities for Americans and their counterparts from key countries around the world to interact, and come to know one another, thus setting a foundation of mutual understanding and respect for future governmental and nongovernmental interactions critical to our national security.

For example, the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) brings more than 5,200 key political and private sector leaders to the U.S. each year- 326 IVLP alums are current or former heads of state,

including from such key allies as the United Kingdom, India, and Brazil. The Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program- founded by Sens. Lugar and Kennedy in the wake of 9/11- provides scholarships for 5,000 high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to live with American host families, attend U.S. high schools, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. Academic exchanges have over time provided scholarships to hundreds of thousands of students and scholars from the U.S. and around the world to study, teach, and conduct research. These participants, chosen for their talent and leadership potential, have influenced generations of students and colleagues through their teaching and research.

State Department exchanges also provide opportunities for Americans to gain skills critical to our national security. The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), both for professionals and for high school students, provides scholarships for Americans to intensively study less-commonly taught languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Russian, and Turkish. NSLI graduates are then able to use their newly acquired language skills in capacities that advance U.S interests in these world regions and thus bolster our national security.

The examples of State Department international exchange programs provided in this letter only scratch the surface- the Department, in partnership with the NGO international exchange community, administers a vast array of cost-effective programs with proven success. While I realize that this is a time of great budget difficulty and tough choices, I also recognize that a significant cut in the exchanges budget (H.R. 1 mandates a 21 per cent reduction) will greatly diminish the progress exchanges have facilitated in bolstering national security and providing tangible economic benefits to communities around the U.S.

As the FY 2011 appropriations process moves forward, I ask you to keep in mind the importance of exchange programs to our country's economic growth and security, and to maintain State Department exchanges at their current FY 2010 level of funding, \$635 million.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Wayne Nelson,

CA President