

Opinion: Close down USAID and we are all a lot less safe. By Pamela White, *Portland Press Herald*, 24 Feb 2025

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Funding of federal programs should be evaluated by the American people, not out-of-touch billionaires.

Elon Musk, who has zero authority to fire even a janitor, has decided that USAID is a “criminal organization” that “must die.” Criminal organization? I remind Mr. Musk that this organization has saved millions of lives in his native South Africa. Literally millions of people in South Africa are alive because of the highly respected HIV/AIDS program that was established by President Bush and distributes medicine around the globe to stop the spread of HIV.

And this is only one program.

USAID also feeds millions of children, educates girls, builds power grids and grows economies. USAID tracks climate change indicators and epidemics all over the world. USAID’s beloved logo (which was [torn off the walls of its headquarters](#)) means food, medicine, shelter, school, roads, power and building democracies to millions all over the globe.

USAID staff don’t serve in fancy posts like Paris or London. They serve in countries with no running water and little fresh food and constant electrical outages that ruin small appliances. It is not a fancy agency; it is a very hard-working one.

I never remember meeting one Foreign Service officer who didn’t offer to work overtime for free. I never worked with one officer who wasn’t intent on making the world a better place. I never met one officer who didn’t love their work and was dedicated to making the USA safer, stronger and more prosperous.

USAID represents the very best of us. It is not a ball of worms, as Elon claims (I doubt very much that he has any idea what we do at USAID). It is a beacon of hope and respect to all. Close it down and we are all a lot less safe. And millions will die.

The Trump decision to stop research money going to universities will also hit Maine hard. As Attorney General Frey said on Feb. 10, “Cuts could result in the suspension of life-saving and life-extending clinical trials, disruption of research programs, layoffs and laboratory closures.” UNE receives millions of dollars of research funding that it is on the brink of losing. Next, the Department of Education will be under the ax. Look for drastic cuts in daycare, preschool and special needs funding. It has already started.

If federal programs need to be evaluated and streamlined, that's fine with me. But this isn't throwing the baby out with the bathwater, it's throwing out the whole family.

Call your congressional representatives and demand to see the justification for slashed budgets that provide invaluable services to Maine people and those nations in desperate need of our compassion. Demand accountability. Demand respect. Never forget that it is "We the People" who are in charge. Let's make our voices heard.