

Foreign Assistance in the News

By Dottie Rayburn, USAID Alumni Association, 17 April 2026

Legislative Outlook

The next few months will be very busy on the Hill, and UAA members will be tracking legislative actions impacting the current use of foreign assistance dollars, as well as the future direction of legislation affecting foreign affairs.

Appropriations: The President's FY 27 budget was released on April 3, initiating the congressional appropriations process for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026. The budget proposal calls for significant reductions in non-defense spending (including international affairs) while seeking a \$1.5 trillion defense budget. A further defense supplemental request is also anticipated. No dates have been announced yet for Secretary Rubio to testify on the State/Foreign Operations budget. Nevertheless, the House Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State and Related Programs (formerly HACFO) is scheduled to markup its FY 27 foreign affairs funding bill on April 23, with full Appropriations Committee markup on April 28. We will be able to see bill text the day before subcommittee markup, and report text the day before full committee. The Senate will turn to its process in May, with June markups anticipated. Particularly given that this is an election year, it is highly likely that the new fiscal year will begin on a Continuing Resolution.

Under the President's budget proposal, total international affairs budget would be cut by 30% in FY27 to \$35.6 billion. Compared to a proposed 48% cut last year – to which Congress responded with a 16% reduction in FY26. The request assumes \$2.3 billion in rescissions, which is much more modest than the \$20 billion proposed in FY26 and the \$7.9 billion enacted in a rescissions bill under the Impoundment Control Act.

Global health. Programs would total \$5.1 billion, a 46% reduction from FY26 level of \$9.4 billion. The budget emphasizes flexibility and does not propose any specific amounts for various programs from malaria to HIV. This approach of breaking the traditional account structure was successful in FY26 with humanitarian funds.

Humanitarian assistance. The budget request totals \$4 billion, identical to the FY26 request level, and 26% below from the FY26 enacted level.

AUTHORIZATION

We are tracking HFAC Chairman Mast's interest in rewriting the Foreign Service Act and have provided technical advice/recommendations to the Minority side of the Committee, which requested our ideas. Likewise, we have provided input to the SFRC Minority staff

foreign their consideration. Mast has set a goal of rewriting the FSA this year, and is hoping to hold a markup of such legislation sometime in June.

Likewise, we are tracking other pieces of authorization legislation that may end up being added to the National Defense Authorization Act. The key objective is to preserve U.S. foreign assistance capacity and USAID's statutory framework, through this period of uncertainty, until such time as hearings might be held and discussions undertaken with Congress on any fundamental legislative changes affecting foreign assistance.

FARM BILL

In this vein, we are tracking (and engaging with Aid on the Hill colleagues) the Farm Bill which would codify the move of Food for Peace to USDA. As with FY 26, the President's budget for FY 27, calls for elimination of FFP. Meanwhile, an interagency agreement between State and USDA, moves management of FFP over to USDA. We are seeking to avoid such codification in law, at this time.

FSNs

Several former USAID officials are in touch with a wide range of Congressional staff and Members encouraging them to engage with State on the issue of providing SIVs to USAID's Locally Employed Staff (FSNs) who served 15 years but less than the required 20 years. Secretary Rubio signed a determination on March 24 that the elimination of USAID was an "exceptional circumstance", thereby qualifying 15-year FSNs for SIVs. There is strong interest in assuring that determination is implemented across all embassies.

Hearings

In general, it is expected that more hearings will take place this year than last. For example, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is holding a hearing on Tuesday, April 21 regarding "Counterterrorism in Africa". Hearings can be viewed on a Committee's website and/or Youtube.