

which represents less than one percent of the Federal budget and is one of the most cost-effective ways of protecting our interests across the globe. Today, more than ever, our health, security, and prosperity depend on a world in which basic human needs are met, fundamental rights and freedoms are respected, conflicts are resolved peacefully, and the world's resources are used wisely.

In this regard, I commend to my colleagues an excellent op-ed by Sharon Waxman, vice-president of the International Rescue Committee. Her article in *The Hill*, "Don't Let Foreign Aid Fall Off the Fiscal Cliff," outlines the importance of foreign aid in saving lives and easing suffering for millions around the world.

[From *The Hill*, Nov. 30, 2012]

DON'T LET FOREIGN AID FALL OFF THE FISCAL CLIFF

(By Sharon Waxman)

With the presidential election behind us, attention has turned to the impending "fiscal cliff". By New Year's Day, the Obama Administration and Congress must identify \$1.2 trillion in savings between spending cuts, revenue increases and entitlement reform. Otherwise, most federal programs will be cut by a staggering 8.2 percent.

On the chopping block is foreign assistance, which provides lifesaving aid to millions of vulnerable people, including Syrian refugees fleeing horrific violence and seeking safety and help in neighboring countries. The consequences of having the budget axe fall on foreign aid at this time could be dire.

The Syrian conflict is in its 20th month and displacement into Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq has more than tripled during the last three. By year's end, it's estimated that 700,000 Syrian refugees will be spread out across the region, overwhelming the communities hosting them and fueling a humanitarian crisis.

Last week, I visited a hospital wing in Amman, Jordan, filled with Syrian refugees. There, I met a father from Homs who had been out buying bread when his neighborhood came under siege. Now he is paralyzed from the chest down from shrapnel wounds. His wife and eight-year-old son keep vigil at his hospital bed, day and night. Their alternatives are few. They either move to a refugee camp, a grim prospect as winter approaches, or become part of a massive, underserved and desperate urban refugee population.

Meanwhile, other large-scale humanitarian emergencies have worsened or unfolded in the past year.

An estimated 18 million people are food insecure in Africa's Sahel region because of chronic poverty and crushing drought, and four million children are malnourished. In Mali, conflict in the north, which has caused the displacement of some 400,000 people, has exacerbated its food crisis. Violence in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states of Sudan has forced 175,000 refugees to flee to South Sudan and an additional 65,000 to Ethiopia.

Violence continues to spiral in eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where fighting repeatedly uproots communities, disrupts food production and shuts down health services. And whenever conflict escalates there, so does violence targeting women. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, a humanitarian crisis has worsened, with unrest and natural disasters uprooting more than half a million people.

All told, more than 44 million people are currently displaced by conflict around the world—the highest number in 15 years.

My organization, the International Rescue Committee, is on the ground in these and other conflict and disaster zones, responding

to pressing humanitarian needs. We see firsthand how foreign assistance is saving lives and easing the suffering of countless people.

The need for the United States to respond to global humanitarian emergencies is increasing exponentially at the very time that across-the-board cuts may go into effect.

While we appreciate the daunting budget decisions ahead, foreign aid represents less than one percent of all federal spending, and non-war foreign assistance has already been cut by 15 percent over the last two years. An additional 8.2 percent reduction in foreign aid will undoubtedly cut the very programs that enable the United States to respond to human suffering and foster economic growth and stability. It will put millions of lives at risk and set the U.S. back years in its effort to lift people out of poverty and reduce dependency. Such cuts would be shortsighted and would not solve America's fiscal woes.

America's continued leadership in foreign policy and foreign assistance is critical, but it cannot happen on a shoe-string budget. The U.S. government must have the right tools at its disposal to conduct effective diplomacy, encourage development and provide humanitarian assistance to effect positive change in areas where it's desperately needed.

In the weeks ahead, we hope the Administration and Congress will reach an agreement that moves America off this precarious fiscal cliff while preserving America's leadership in foreign assistance and its commitment and ability to protect the world's most vulnerable.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2012

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. Speaker, due to a family matter requiring my presence in New Mexico, I was not able to be present for a number of votes on the House floor this week.

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 627, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 4606, to authorize the issuance of right-of-way permits for natural gas pipelines in Glacier National Park, and for other purposes, as amended, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 628, on motion to suspend the rules and pass S. 3193, the Barona Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Clarification Act of 2012, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 629, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6504, the Small Business Investment Company Modernization Act of 2012, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 630, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the Senate Amendment on H.R. 3783, an act to provide for a comprehensive strategy to counter Iran's growing hostile presence and activity in the Western Hemisphere, and for other purposes, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 631, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6621, to correct and improve certain provisions of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act and title 35, United States Code, as amended, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 632, on motion to suspend the rules and pass S. 3642, the Theft of Trade Secrets Clarification Act, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 633, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6672, to reauthorize certain programs under the Public Health Service Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to public health security and all-hazards preparedness and response and for other purposes, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 634, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1845, the Medicare IVIG Access Act, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 635, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to H. Res. 668, to refer H.R. 5862, a bill making congressional reference to the United States Court of Federal Claims pursuant to sections 1492 and 2509 of title 28, United States Code, the Indian trust-related claims of the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma as well as its individual members, as amended, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 636, on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6655, the Protect Our Kids Act, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 637, on the motion to suspend the rules and pass S. 3564, the Public Interest Declassification Board Reauthorization Act, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 638, on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6016, the Government Employee Accountability Act, as amended, I would have voted "aye."

RECOGNIZING COLONEL MICHAEL J. MEESE

HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2012

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Colonel Michael J. Meese, Professor and Head of the Department of Social Sciences at West Point. Colonel Meese is retiring January 18, 2013 after over 31 years of long and distinguished service.

As Head of the Social Sciences Department at West Point, Colonel Meese teaches economics and national security courses and leads the 70 military and civilian faculty members who teach political science, economics, and terrorism-related courses. He also leads the Combating Terrorism Center, the Office of Economics and Manpower Analysis, and the Conflict and Human Security Studies Program whose personnel both teach cadets and conduct nationally significant research in terrorism, Army personnel policy, and cultural studies. He serves as the Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group, developing the 2013–2019 Strategic Plan, which is critical to the long term future of the Academy. Previously he chaired the Academic Excellence Subcommittee of the NCAA Accreditation, which was instrumental to continued intercollegiate athletic participation. He chaired the Superintendent's Planning Team that examined the military program and developed the most significant recent changes to the military program at West Point: The consolidation of military science courses, the creation of the