

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 16, 2010

VOTE “NO” on \$108 Million S. 987

Support \$1 Million GOP Alternative

Dear Republican Colleague,

I urge you to **oppose** the Senate bill, **S. 987**, the “International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act of 2010,” when it comes up for a vote today in its current version.

- **S. 987 would authorize \$108 Million over 5 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.**
- **S. 987 authorizes this assistance without having at hand a clear accounting of existing U.S. efforts for the prevention of child marriage.** According to the Congressional Research Service, there is no available, confirmed figure on how much taxpayer funding is already being used to fight child marriage in developing countries. (For example, in Ethiopia USAID has worked to reduce child marriage by raising awareness of such a harmful practice among religious and political leaders, and has further partnered to establish girls’ advisory committees to prevent child marriage and encourage school attendance of girls; in India, USAID co-funds programs for in-school counseling that includes instructions on the benefits of delaying marriage until the legal age; in Yemen, USAID is working with local organizations to improve community knowledge of the social and health consequences of child marriage, while strengthening community support to keep girls in school. Yet, no actual assistance figures exist for such programs.) We should not authorize more funding without first assessing what we are now spending and how we might address any deficiencies in our current programs and improve our efforts.
- **By contrast, H.R. 6521, the GOP alternative that I have introduced would result in no more than \$1 Million in potential costs,** while making it clear that child marriage is a violation of human rights and that its prevention should be a goal of US foreign policy; requiring the creation of a multi-year strategy; requiring a comprehensive assessment of what the United States is already doing and funding in the effort to fight child marriage; and requiring that the practice of child marriage in other countries be reported each year as part of the annual Human Rights Report.

Again, I urge a **NO** vote on S. 987 when it is brought up for consideration. To co-sponsor H.R. 6521, please contact Christina Jenckes at christina.jenckes@mail.house.gov or x68467.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Member of Congress