
THE IMPACT OF MASSIVE CUTS TO UN FUNDING

The House Fiscal Year 2025 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill would make unprecedented cuts to U.S. funding for the United Nations. If enacted, the legislation would put the U.S. on a glide path to international irrelevancy and be a gift to China, Russia, Cuba, and other authoritarian regimes who would like to see nothing more than the U.S. exit the United Nations. **In short, passage of the legislation would mean the end of U.S. global leadership within the UN—in place since WWII—leaving the field to competitors and alienating allies.** The bill's anemic funding levels and complete disregard for the most elemental foundational structures of the U.S.-UN relationship would cripple vital counterterrorism, peacekeeping, humanitarian, food security, health, and development programs at a time of mounting challenges to global security and stability.

- **Overall, the House FY25 SFOPS bill would cut funding for the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account by 82% from the FY24 enacted level.** The CIO account funds U.S. assessments for the UN regular budget (UNRB) and more than 40 other international organizations, most of which would see U.S. funding eliminated.
- **This bill would eliminate all funding for the UN regular budget (UNRB). Meeting UNRB obligations is the most basic financial responsibility of any UN Member State. If this policy was enacted two years in a row, it would result in the U.S. losing its vote in the UN General Assembly, pushing America into joining the ranks of Venezuela and Somalia as equally fiscally irresponsible Member States.**
- **It zeroes out the entire International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account**—which contains over a dozen UN entities—and includes core funding for UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, the UN Development Program, the UN Environment Programme, and the UN Human Rights Office. As one example, right now, UNEP is spearheading negotiations to create an international legally binding instrument on **plastic pollution**, including in the marine environment. UNEP's ability to bring these talks to a successful conclusion and then to support countries in implementing the agreement would be jeopardized by the funding cuts envisioned in the bill.
- The bill would also prevent funding to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—the UN agency that we just rejoined in July after exiting in 2018. [UNESCO is a prime example of the shortsighted failure of defunding UN entities to achieve asymmetric policy goals.](#)
 - When the U.S. defunded and withdrew from UNESCO, programs we valued around literacy, freedom of the press, and Holocaust education were curtailed. After we left, China became the organization's largest funder and sought to use that as leverage to push UNESCO to support vocational and job training programs in countries partnering with it on the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2023, the U.S. decided to reenter because it was manifestly in our interest to press for American locations to be designated as Heritage sites, to [support Holocaust education](#), and to [help set standards for artificial intelligence around the world](#). **Leaving UNESCO did not serve U.S. interests in 2018 and losing our vote and leaving dozens of UN agencies would be an even more disastrous policy choice in 2024.**

GLOBAL SAFETY

- While the bill purports to be strong on China, the funding cuts it envisages would actually signal a U.S. retreat from the world stage, creating a vacuum that the PRC, Russia, and other countries would be more than happy to fill. In addition to being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the PRC is now the second largest financial contributor to the UNRB and UN peacekeeping. Cutting off funding for the UNRB would allow the PRC to spin a narrative that the U.S. is an unreliable partner and not interested in international cooperation. **As U.S.-UN Amb. Linda Thomas Greenfield has noted, U.S. arrears are “China’s favorite talking point.”**

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- The U.S. is assessed 22% of the UNRB, which works out to approximately \$700 million per year, or roughly 6.5% of Wyoming's 2025-2026 state budget (\$10.9 billion). Nearly a quarter of the UNRB finances special political missions operating in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Colombia, Haiti, and Yemen. These missions' responsibilities vary depending on their mandates from the UN Security Council, but often include: facilitating peace negotiations between armed factions, monitoring the implementation of ceasefires and peace agreements, providing technical assistance for holding democratic elections, coordinating distribution of humanitarian and development assistance, investigating and reporting on human rights violations, and supporting the development of effective governing institutions. **Slashing this funding would force the UN to cut operations and lead to increased insecurity.**
 - Haiti, for example, faces a worsening humanitarian and security crisis, with armed gangs in control of more than 80% of the capital and more than 5.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid. On October 2, 2023, the UN Security Council voted to approve the launch of a multinational security support (MSS) mission headed by the Kenyan national police. The mission, which is about to deploy, will explicitly focus on building the capacity of the Haitian national police to reestablish security against increasing gang violence. **The UN political mission in Haiti (BINUH) will play an important role in helping to coordinate these international efforts, but the House SFOPS bill would cut off all U.S. funding.** This cut would be seen as another betrayal to Haitians and could end the UN political operation there, as it's unlikely that other countries would finance the entire cost for a mission when the U.S. has been [pushing to have a more robust presence](#) but then refuses to pay its share.
- The UNRB supports efforts to address threats to international peace and security by monitoring global implementation of legally-binding multilateral sanctions measures. From its seat on the Council, the U.S. has successfully pushed for the adoption of robust sanctions—including **asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, trade restrictions**, and other measures—targeting the malign activities of terrorist groups (Al-Qaeda and ISIS) and rogue states that seek to obtain weapons of mass destruction (North Korea). This work—critical to the national security of both the U.S. and its allies—would decrease, as would our ability to mobilize coalitions if the U.S. cuts off funding for the UNRB.
- The UNRB is also a key source of funding for the UN's human rights work, including **investigatory mechanisms that document and expose human rights violations, from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to Iran's suppression of political dissent, to the civil war in Syria.** The work of the UN Human Rights Council, High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other entities raise public awareness of human rights violations and magnify the voices of dissidents and civil society organizations on the ground. Cutting our UNRB contribution would also give countries hostile to international human rights norms ammunition to call for all funding for these activities to be cut from the UN budget entirely.

UN PEACEKEEPING

- The bill's \$1.068 billion for the CIPA account would make it impossible to even meet our estimated FY25 obligations, let alone pay down our arrears, ensuring that our debt to UN peacekeeping would surpass \$1.4 billion. The CIPA account funds U.S. assessments for 10 UN peacekeeping missions, including critical operations in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Golan Heights, Lebanon, and South Sudan. All of these missions were approved by the U.S. within the UN Security Council. Support for peacekeeping has historically been bipartisan and [backed by our military](#) for the following reasons:
 - **Peacekeepers save lives, save money, and reduce conflict.** As noted in a [Foreign Affairs article](#) that evaluated peacekeeping over many years, "Decades of academic research has demonstrated that UN peacekeeping not only works at stopping conflicts but works better than anything else experts know...And it does all this at a very low cost." The Government Accountability Office [found](#) that UN operations are 1/8 the cost to American taxpayers of deploying comparable U.S. missions.

GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- **Passage of this bill would mean slashing contributions to Sudan when it's on the brink of collapse.** The total number of internally displaced has surpassed 9 million, the most in the world. Nearly five million people are close to famine and many are forced to [eat dirt and leaves to survive](#). A window of opportunity exists for the international community to act now during the planting season, but this bill would cut or eliminate aid to UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, heaping additional misery during the world's largest hunger crisis.
- In 2023, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and blockade of its agricultural exports, climate change-induced droughts, and the deterioration of food security in places like Gaza and Sudan, [282 million from 59 countries](#) faced acute food insecurity, a global increase of 24 million from 2022. The World Food Program projects that the number of people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity (the most severe classification) in 2024 will increase by 73% to 1.3 million worldwide. The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) emergency crop and vegetable production support enables 23 million people globally to grow their own food for a year. **This allowed farmers to produce \$2.75 billion worth of food.** Slashing overseas food aid in this bill and cutting funding to FAO will lead to suffering around the world, while also causing greater insecurity and higher levels of migration. **According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 67% of refugees and asylum seekers originated from countries with food crises.**
- **The bill prohibits funding for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which** provides voluntary contraceptives and life-saving maternal health care in development and humanitarian settings. UNFPA also works to prevent gender-based violence including tech-facilitated gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). UNFPA is in a country before, during and after a crisis, and is sometimes the sole provider of health care supplies for sexual and reproductive and maternal health. UNFPA is able to work in highly complex settings like Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Yemen. With respect to **UNRWA**, the bill extends the current funding prohibition, even though, after the war ends, there will be a massive reconstruction effort. In addition to meeting ongoing humanitarian needs, UNRWA remains an essential humanitarian actor in the region.
- The bill reduces the **Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account** to \$2.453 billion, a reduction of \$724.8 million (22.8% cut) from the FY24 enacted base funding level and **a 67% decrease from the total FY24 enacted.** Significant cuts from humanitarian assistance budgets would have catastrophic consequences on millions of lives and could further destabilize already fragile countries and populations, as well as our own. **Ultimately, these cuts will cost far more than they could possibly save.** Poorer and lower-middle income countries, which host more than 80% of refugees around the globe, will be most impacted by these cuts, and will reconsider their policies or gravitate to non-traditional donor countries with problematic policies and strings attached (like China). In some areas of the world, UN agencies like UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, and UNFPA are the only ones operating in contexts where political actors can't, producing political and humanitarian dividends that states cannot achieve on their own. These cuts would imperil the ability of humanitarian agencies to not only respond to future crises, but also to simply meet current global needs.

GLOBAL HEALTH FUNDING

- **The bill cuts more than \$360 million from essential global health accounts and prohibits all funding—assessed and voluntary—to the World Health Organization (WHO). The bill cuts contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria by nearly \$400 million from FY24 enacted. The cuts to the Global Fund reflect statutory matching requirements capping the U.S. contribution.**
- With a presence in over 150 countries and the trust of governments around the world, the WHO is the world's only multilateral, international public health agency. The WHO is uniquely positioned to develop, refine, and disseminate technical and

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normative guidance essential to battling disease, providing development assistance, and supporting health emergency preparedness and response. **The WHO coordinates its entire global public health mandate with a budget of \$3.3 billion a year—16.8% of the 2025 budget of the Maryland Dept of Health (\$19.6 billion).**

- A prohibition on all WHO funding would lead to a reduction in international deployments of scientific experts to respond to deadly outbreaks of polio, measles, Yellow fever, malaria, and cholera, causing these diseases to spread further, faster, and at greater financial expense and economic impact. This would also significantly **raise the likelihood of causing imported polio and measles outbreaks in the United States.**
 - The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), of which the WHO is a founding partner, has decreased the number of wild poliovirus cases by 99.9% since 1988. The WHO leads surveillance, immunization, and technical support for GPEI and is able to reach remote areas in countries where polio still exists. **Without these detection capabilities, polio could surge to 200,000 cases annually within a decade at a cost of \$14 billion.**
 - In 2023 alone, the WHO responded to 65 health and humanitarian emergencies, supporting 102 million people across 29 countries.
 - **The WHO is also supporting the approval and roll-out of new malaria vaccines into routine immunization programs, as a game-changing tool in the suite of malaria prevention interventions to combat a disease that each year causes over 600,000 deaths worldwide.** WHO's objective is to eliminate malaria in 30 countries by the year 2030. If this vaccine, in conjunction with other proven interventions is deployed quickly in Africa, that dream could become reality. If the U.S. abandons the global effort and defunds the WHO, that goal is no longer reachable.
 - Eliminating U.S. funding for the WHO also puts the U.S. at **greater risk of seasonal influenza viruses** that constantly mutate and have the potential to become pandemic strains, reduces Smallpox biosecurity with the WHO acting as a neutral party between the only two holders of the virus—the U.S. and Russia—and hinders market access for U.S. vaccine manufacturers that rely on WHO regulatory guidance and approval to develop, market, and distribute vaccine products.
- In terms of losing access to flu data that protects Americans, **defunding would cut the U.S. government out of the development of the seasonal influenza vaccine for the Southern Hemisphere.** This is a process coordinated by the WHO in partnership with the U.S. Since 2004, the U.S. has helped build a global network of WHO flu centers, buying lab equipment and training scientists. The centers in more than 100 countries collect samples from sick people, isolate the viruses and search for any new viruses that could cause an epidemic or pandemic. The CDC houses one of five WHO Collaborating Centers that collect these virus samples, while the FDA runs one of the four WHO regulatory labs that help vaccine makers determine the correct amount of antigen, which triggers the immune response, to include in vaccines. **The CDC could lose access to the data and virus samples that protects Americans from potentially deadly strains of flu from around the world.**
- No organization is perfect, and the WHO has welcomed numerous independent reform and oversight panels that have examined the agency's response to the pandemic, reforms to the International Health Regulations, and ongoing negotiations designed to strengthen global pandemic preparedness and response. The U.S. is actively engaged with WHO member states in each of these areas and would surrender its seat at the negotiation table if funding is cut.
- **It's important to restate how extreme ending U.S. engagement with and funding of the WHO would be. The [American Medical Association](#), the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and the [Infectious Diseases Society of America](#) have all stated clear opposition, as has the and even [the Heritage Foundation](#).**