

As UN Summit on Millennium Development Goals Opens in New York, Water for the World Legislation is Poised to Become a Major US Contribution

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. Senate passed by unanimous consent the Water for the World Act, a bill that strengthens the clean water and sanitation foreign assistance priorities championed by Congressman Earl Blumenauer. As the United Nations begins its special summit on the Millennium Development Goals in New York, Water for the World now comes to the U.S. House for consideration. If passed, the legislation would focus and strengthen the United States contribution to meeting the MDGs.

“The Senate’s passage of Water for the World Act is a major bipartisan achievement,” **said Blumenauer**

. “Senator Durbin, Representative Payne and I have championed this legislation for over two years, and will now work with our colleagues for swift passage in the House. With the opening today of the United Nations anti-poverty summit in New York, now is the very best time for the United States to signal our commitment to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by passing the crucial legislation.”

In 2005, the U.S. enacted Congressman Blumenauer’s bipartisan “Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act,” establishing the Millennium Development Goal’s water and sanitation target as a major goal of US foreign assistance. This landmark legislation now reaches millions. With funding at \$315 million in 2010, this legislation is providing millions of people in developing nations with safe, clean drinking water.

Although progress is being made through partnerships between the U.S. Government, NGOs, businesses, and local partners, more than one billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and more than two billion people live without improved sanitation. By 2025, climate change, drought, and rapid population growth will further stress water resources, leaving 2.8 billion people in more than 48 countries facing severe and chronic water shortages. The world’s greatest health problem may become the most serious threat to global security.

“The Water for the World Act helps refocus America’s foreign assistance on one of the most dangerous problems facing developing countries: lack of access to clean drinking water,” **said Blumenauer**

. “By working to provide clean water for the first time to 100 million people, we can bring safety and stability to regions where access to water has been a major cause of conflict. In 2005, Congress passed my bipartisan Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, and I look forward to building on the successes of that program.”

The Water for the World Act sets a benchmark of providing 100 million of the world’s poorest with first-time access to safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation by 2015. To achieve this, the Act builds upon the success of the 2005 Water for the Poor Act by:

- Establishing an Senior Advisor for Water within USAID to implement country-specific water strategies;

- Creating a Special Coordinator for International Water within the State Department to coordinate the diplomatic policy of the U.S. with respect to global freshwater issues;

- Establishing programs in countries of greatest need that invest in local capacity, education, and coordination with US efforts; and

- Emphasizing cross-border and cross-discipline collaboration, as well as the utilization of low-cost technologies, such as hand washing stations and latrines.

The Water for the World Act, S. 624/H.R. 2030, is endorsed by a number of global health and environmental advocates, including Water Advocates, the Natural Resources Defense Council, ONE, Mercy Corps, International Housing Coalition, CARE, and Population Services International.