

Policy Agenda for the 118th Congress

Atlantic Alliance: For more than 70 years, the NATO alliance and broader transatlantic cooperation have been a cornerstone of American economic and national security strategy. Today, our transatlantic allies are essential to efforts to support Ukraine's defense and confront authoritarian threats to democracy, peace, and security. Beyond that crisis, our transatlantic allies have been indispensable in shared efforts to defend human rights and fight corruption, hasten a global clean energy transition, and establish new norms for trade and technology policy and more resilient supply chains. **We ask Congress to support policies that affirm our NATO commitments including Article 5 and strengthen Transatlantic cooperation on global challenges, including economic and energy security, climate change, and advancing democracy and human rights.**

China: As the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy underscores, managing geostrategic and economic competition between the U.S. and China is one of the most consequential and complex challenges we face. Drawing on our extraordinary strengths – our strong alliances and partnerships around the world and the vitality of our economy and democratic institutions – we must contend with the Chinese Communist Party as we pursue a future in which human rights are protected, emerging technologies promote freedom and well-being rather than enabling authoritarianism, and the people everywhere, including in Taiwan, can peacefully determine their own future. We must expand diplomatic efforts and ramp up development assistance to ensure that democracy delivers. At the same time, we must also guard against reckless and inflammatory rhetoric and preserve space for coordination on existential, transnational issues including climate change, pandemic preparedness and prevention, and nuclear non-proliferation. **We ask Congress to invest in the sources of American strength, including by funding critical industrial policy investments at home, and to avoid rhetoric and actions that needlessly escalates tensions.**

Climate Change: Climate change is the preeminent security challenge facing Americans today. Increased flooding, drought, wildfire, and extreme weather events are affecting lives and livelihoods both here at home and around the world, contributing to growing food, water, energy, and economic insecurity. The U.S. can and must play a leading role in tackling the climate crisis, by both investing in our own energy transition and climate resilience and supporting, through financial and other means, global efforts to decarbonize and adapt to the real and immediate impacts of climate change. President Biden and Congress have delivered historic legislation to catalyze U.S.-based development and deployment of clean energy technology. But further action is needed to build on that foundation and ensure that the U.S. and our allies are positioned to lead the transition to a clean energy and climate resilient future. **We ask Congress to support policies and investments that promote clean energy development, manufacturing, and deployment at home and abroad, and address the physical, economic, and social risks posed by climate change.**

Cuba: The continued U.S. embargo on Cuba, a policy without parallel around the world, has increased hardships for the Cuban people, alienated key partners in Latin America, and allowed global competitors Russia and China to expand their influence. The Trump Administration's expansion of that policy, which included naming Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism, decimated Cuba's economy to the point that it has triggered a humanitarian crisis and forced more than 2% of the country's population to flee – a staggering figure that overshadows the numbers from the Mariel boatlift and the Balsero crisis combined. President Biden's policy shifts in the wake of the largest anti-government protests since Castro took power were a prudent and measured first step toward engagement with Cuba and support for the Cuban people and private business on the island. **We ask Congress to build on this momentum through measures that support private enterprise in Cuba, expand the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, and encourage greater engagement with the Cuban government on migration and other issues while putting human rights first.**

Defense Budget: The U.S. military is and must remain the strongest in the world to defend our vital national security interests and to assist our democratic allies in their own defense. But sustaining our national security in a competitive world will require diverse investments in the U.S. toolkit for managing our international interests as well as a renewed focus on the foundations of our strength here at home. Over the past decade, defense spending grew by 18%, to \$858 billion, crowding out investments in diplomacy, development, and other international programs, which grew by only 6% to \$58.7 billion. Meanwhile annual appropriations to address the climate crisis at home and abroad were less than \$45 billion. Recent defense budgets have reduced spending on wasteful and outdated legacy systems, in favor of modernization, but a broader rebalancing is needed. **We ask Congress to authorize spending levels for the Defense Department aligned to the national security strategy and to avoid wasteful and unnecessary spending.**

Democracy and Human Rights: As President Biden put it, "Democracy is the root of our society, the wellspring of our power, and the source of our renewal." But democracies today face growing challenges. Malicious actors have attacked the integrity of elections. Emerging technologies have empowered oppressive regimes and accelerated the spread of hate, bigotry, and misinformation. Support for democracy has declined where corruption, violence, and persistent inequality prevent many from experiencing the benefits of political freedoms. Vladimir Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine is a horrific assault on democracy and the rules-based international order. The U.S. has been indispensable to international efforts to defend democracy and support the spread of protections for human rights, and that leadership role must continue. Most importantly, we must demonstrate to the world the vitality of our own multi-racial democracy by strengthening our democratic institutions and, after centuries of struggle, achieving racial equity at home. **We ask Congress to sustain its support for the Ukrainian people in their fight to secure their democracy and to take actions to strengthen American democracy at home.**

Diplomacy: America's diplomats protect U.S. citizens, promote American businesses, rally our allies, and negotiate and secure our interests. But today, American diplomacy requires renewed congressional attention. Following the compounding impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and

Trump-era budget and staffing cuts, the State Department faces a readiness crisis. In 2019, China overtook the U.S. in terms of numbers of diplomatic outposts around the world. At the same time, the Department is in urgent need of modernization to keep pace with current international challenges and to attract and retain a competitive workforce, benefitting from the full diversity of our country. **We ask Congress to pass annual State Department Authorization bills that include provisions to fully staff existing U.S. missions abroad and expand the diversity of our diplomatic corps.**

Extreme Poverty: After decades of decline, the number of people affected by malnutrition and hunger jumped from 618 million to 770 million over the past three years. An emerging debt crisis threatens to make matters even worse as global interest rates rise. The internationally agreed goal to eliminate hunger and extreme poverty by 2030, part of the larger UN-backed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is slipping out of reach. Global food and economic insecurity are not only moral concerns for Americans, but pragmatic ones. When developing countries experience increased opportunity and access to nutrition, it expands markets for U.S. businesses, reduces drivers of global conflict and displacement, and lowers health risks around the world. This is why recent Chicago Council polling found that 93% of Americans see hunger eradication as a somewhat or very important foreign policy goal. **We ask Congress to invest in development and humanitarian efforts at a pace aligned to the goal of ending hunger and extreme poverty by 2030 and to take action to break the debt-disaster cycle.**

Fighting Corruption: Across the world, corruption has emerged a grave threat to the success and spread of democracy. It undermines public accountability and fuels disillusionment with political freedoms. It has enabled dictators to remain in power and, in the case of Russia's Vladimir Putin, to wage a devastating war of aggression. It diverts public resources that could otherwise be invested in strengthening public health and education systems. Rooting out public corruption, and the illicit finance it drives and depends on, demands both proactive U.S. leadership and close international cooperation. **We ask Congress to support measures that leverage the U.S. legal system to disrupt foreign bribery at its source, address the ways that corrupt actors and their enablers move and hide the proceeds of corruption and other crime, and provide adequate funding for the U.S. financial intelligence unit (FinCEN).**

Gender Equity: Around the world, women and girls face significant obstacles to their full and equal participation in society. Despite facing the brunt of negative consequences from poverty, conflict, and climate change, they are often excluded from leadership and decision-making structures. Studies have shown that the full inclusion of women strengthens economies and enhances efforts to prevent and end conflicts and sustain peace – important U.S. foreign policy objectives. The State Department and USAID have a well-established history of working to encourage the political and economic empowerment of women and girls, prevent gender-based violence, and engage women in peacebuilding efforts around the world, and a range of opportunities exist to expand on that international leadership today. **We ask Congress to support a broad range of legislative initiatives to promote gender equity in partner countries.**

Global Health: The COVID-19 pandemic made clear that the strength of healthcare systems around the world, and access to them for vulnerable communities, have profound impacts on Americans here at home. Global health programs such as the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the President's Malaria Initiative, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria are now more important than ever. Likewise, the decline of U.S. leadership within the World Health Organization (WHO) related international partnerships has been costly. Disruptions in U.S. partnerships with local health organizations as a consequence of policies such as President Trump's sweeping global gag rule affect not only the most vulnerable women in those countries, but everyone. **We ask Congress to ensure that the reauthorization of PEPFAR fulfills the U.S. \$6 billion pledge to the Global Fund replenishment and to sustain U.S. support for international efforts to prepare for and respond to pandemics and other global health challenges.**

International Affairs Budget: Over the past decade, U.S. investments in diplomacy, development, and all other non-military engagement in the world have failed to keep pace with inflation. That trend takes place against a backdrop of rising competition with China and compounding global crises. U.S. leadership in the world can continue to make an extraordinary difference – rallying the world to defend democracies at risk, supporting swift transitions to clean energy, responding to humanitarian crises with life-saving aid, and more – but only if we recommit to properly funding the State Department, USAID, and our other means for securing our interests and advancing our values. **We ask Congress to increase overall funding for the International Affairs budget and to reject politicized attacks on foreign assistance programs.**

International Organizations: Since the founding of the United Nations after World War II, U.S. leadership in international organizations has played a critical role in securing our interests. However, that leadership was deeply undermined when the Trump administration pulled out of the WHO in the midst of a global pandemic, cut off funding for the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine), and withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council. Making matters worse, an outdated congressional cap on UN peacekeeping dues has left the U.S. with more than \$1.1 billion in arrears. These policies left a vacuum at the same time that China and Russia have significantly expanded their engagement at the UN and other multilateral organizations. While President Biden has reversed some harmful decisions, far more is needed to re-establish U.S. leadership at the UN and ensure that support for individual rights and the rule of law remain at the heart of international organizations. **We ask Congress to reject measures that would reduce U.S. leadership at the UN and other multilateral institutions, appropriate funds necessary to pay our arrears, and ensure the U.S. pays its dues to the UN on-time and in-full.**

Iran: Time is running out to stop Iran before it has enough fissile material to build a nuclear weapon. While a return to the internationally negotiated Iran nuclear deal (known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) may now be out of reach, alternative arrangements to freeze, roll back, and monitor Iran's program are urgently needed. Against this backdrop, Iranian citizens have courageously taken to the streets to protest the regime, inspired by Mahsa Amini, a young Iranian woman who was murdered by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly.

The protests have spotlighted for the world the human costs of Iran's clerical rule, economic mismanagement, and the internationally imposed sanctions regime. **We ask Congress to support diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring or developing a nuclear weapon, to express solidarity with the Iranian people, and to reject any new sanctions that would add to their suffering.**

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: For decades, the United States has led international efforts to advance a solution to the conflict that offers both Israelis and Palestinians dignity, security, and self-determination. Commitment to a two-state solution has been U.S. policy since the George W. Bush administration, grounded in our deep historic relationship and shared democratic values with the state of Israel, our significant regional interests in peace and stability, and our commitment to the principle of self-determination and the equal rights of Palestinians. But the path toward peace is fragile, made more difficult by settlement expansion, the legalization of outposts, demolitions and evictions, and incitement and acquiescence to violence, all of which the U.S. has consistently opposed. The Abraham Accords, agreed in 2020 by Israel and the UAE, and later Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, established renewed diplomatic relations between the signatories, pointing a path toward potential broader regional normalization. **We ask members of Congress to take proactive steps to maintain the viability of the two-state solution aligned with international law and to reject actions that undermine that possibility.**

Migration and Refugees: For centuries, the United States has stood as a beacon of freedom and hope and benefitted from successive waves of immigration. In the words of President Ronald Reagan: "They brought with them courage, ambition, and the values of family, neighborhood, work, peace, and freedom. We all came from different lands but we share the same values, the same dream." Today our broken immigration system threatens to erode our competitive advantage in industries of the future, from artificial intelligence to green energy to bioengineering. Net migration to the United States has declined by more than 75% since 2016. Patchwork responses to immigration on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the failure to adjust refugee caps to protect our Afghan partners, have revealed patterns of cruelty at home and undermined U.S. humanitarian leadership abroad at a time when that leadership is desperately needed. **We ask Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation that strengthens our asylum system, expands legal pathways for migration, and protects the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and also to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act.**

North Korea: North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program remains one of the most challenging threats to the security of the U.S. and our allies. The despotic Kim Jong Un regime has used money laundering, overseas labor, cyberattacks, and illegal arms sales – including in support of Russia's war against Ukraine – all while committing gross human rights violations at home. According to UN estimates, 41% of the population is food insecure and in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, challenges likely compounded by the pandemic and the country's self-imposed isolation. After 30 years of stalled progress, it is clear a new approach is needed. **We ask Members of Congress to support diplomatic efforts to reduce threats on the Korean Peninsula and to oppose any new sanctions that would hinder the provision of humanitarian assistance.**

Nuclear Risk Reduction: With the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and President Vladimir Putin's repeated threats that he could use nuclear weapons, Americans have good reason to fear a nuclear catastrophe. At the same time, the frameworks for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons are fraying. Putin has suspended Russia's participation in the bilateral New START treaty. If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other states may seek to follow in their footsteps. China, which currently has a nuclear arsenal less than a tenth the size of that of U.S. and Russia, continues to pursue its aggressive nuclear buildup. After four decades of steady decline in global nuclear weapons inventories, we now risk the launch of a new and more complex nuclear arms race. To reverse these trends, U.S. diplomatic leadership will be essential, and lawmakers may need to resist political pressures for costly new weapons that heighten the risk of miscalculation. **We ask Congress to support new nuclear arms control negotiations with Russia and China.**

Trade and Supply Chains: International trade is central to the U.S. economy and has created economic opportunities for millions of people around the world. To continue to harness trade as a positive force for Americans and the global economy, the U.S. should continue to pursue an integrated approach to economic and industrial policy, taking action to incorporate core labor, safety, and climate standards in all aspects of our engagement with international trading partners. This must be paired with bold investments – at home and abroad – to strengthen American competitiveness and establish more resilient, secure, and transparent supply chains. **We ask Congress to support trade, economic, and industrial policy measures that promote free and fair competition, de-risk critical global supply chains in cooperation with our allies and partners, and strengthen protections for workers and the environment in international trade frameworks.**

Use of Military Force: Article I of the Constitution assigns to Congress the power to declare war. But today, more than two decades after the passage of the 2001 Authorization of the Use of Military Force (AUMF) in the wake of 9/11, the United States remains enmeshed in a "War on Terror" without clearly defined limits, congressional oversight, or public transparency. The 2002 AUMF to invade Iraq was invoked by the Trump Administration to justify escalating hostilities with Iran. Transnational terrorism remains a threat today, but it is long past time for Congress to conduct a comprehensive examination of the efficacy of the militarized response to terrorism of the last 22 years and to reclaim its constitutional authority on matters of war and peace. **We ask Congress to support the repeal of the 2002 AUMF and the replacement of the 2001 AUMF with time-limited legislation that authorizes the use of military force in specific countries against specifically named terrorist groups while enhancing congressional oversight and public transparency.**