

**Tell Your Representative: Don't Co-Sponsor HR 4681.
Please Take a More Constructive Approach**

March 3, 2006

ISSUE: HR 4681, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, is continuing to gain momentum (with 92 co-sponsors as of March 2nd) even though it is not clear if and when it will come to the floor. The Washington newspaper, The Hill reported yesterday that the legislation could be "delayed or derailed because of a divide between Congress and the White House." The Administration is reportedly not happy with some aspects of the bill because it would limit the President's diplomatic options vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The Middle East Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, who is the sponsor of the bill together with Rep. Tom Lantos, the Ranking Minority Member on the House International Relations Committee, has scheduled a hearing for next Wednesday, "Palestinian Authority Elections: Implications for Peace, Regional Security, and U.S. Assistance." HR 4681 will also be the centerpiece of AIPAC's policy conference that begins on Sunday.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) has been communicating with our Congressional contacts about the problematic aspects of HR 4681 and is urging a more constructive approach that prevents further deterioration in the Palestinian territories and allows the Administration to remain engaged in peacemaking, toward the goal of bringing the two parties to the negotiating table. Members of Congress may get increased pressure to sponsor this legislation, so now is the time to call or email your Representative and make the following points.

TAKE ACTION: To find out if your Representative has sponsored the legislation go to: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d109:HR04681:@@P>. If he or she has not:

Ask your Representative not to Co-Sponsor HR 4681 and urge a more constructive, measured approach.

While the US must press the new Palestinian government to commit to nonviolence, recognize Israel and accept previous agreements as set forth by the Quartet on Jan 30th, now is also a time to "wait and see" as the new government forms, not enact far-reaching and permanent changes to US policy, as HR 4681 does in its current form. The bill goes beyond the Quartet's demands, does not leave open the possibility for progress and undermines the United States' ability to remaining engaged with the Palestinian people and resolve the conflict with a two-state solution.

Here are some specific problems that you could mention:

HR 4681 does not pressure Hamas to change in a focused, responsible way. The restrictions and conditions are permanent in nature (because there is no sunset clause) and seek to isolate all Palestinians, not just those associated with Hamas, without providing opportunities or incentives for progress and change.

Provisions in the bill would severely restrict US assistance to the Palestinian people delivered through USAID to NGOs, thereby hampering these important American efforts to foster stability and hope in the West Bank and Gaza. While US assistance for the most essential human health needs such as food and medicine would continue, HR 4681 would make it very difficult for other program support such as that for education, water resource development, employment generation and civil society-building. This indirect aid should continue with appropriate monitoring and supervision, ensuring that it is used for peaceful purposes, but not burdensome restrictions that would severely impede its delivery.

Allow the President the flexibility required to further US national security interests related to US policy toward the Palestinians. Current law prohibits aid going directly to the Palestinian Authority, but the President has used his waiver authority to provide some funding to the PA in the past

when he deemed it in the interest of our national security. The bill's removal of the waiver authority undercuts the President's leadership.

Restrictions on US diplomatic relations with all PA/PLO officials, whether or not they are associated with Hamas, limits the US' ability to remain engaged in peacemaking. The impact of this bill would be to make it much more difficult for Palestinians like President Mahmoud Abbas, Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi who support peace to come to the US to meet with policymakers and almost impossible for the PLO/PA to maintain an office in the US. As Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, C. David Welch, said yesterday in a House International Relations Committee hearing on US Policy toward the Palestinians, "It will be important for us to maintain contact with and support moderate Palestinian voices."

CONTACT INFO:

Email your Representative: www.house.gov/writerep/

Phone numbers: [www.congress.org/congressorg/d](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt?command=congdir)rectory/congdir.tt?command=congdir

This message can also be found online at: www.cmep.org/Alerts/2006Mar3.htm