

NEWS & INSIGHTS



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A Practical Path Forward for U.S. Foreign Assistance

By Senator Roy Blunt

Foreign assistance looks different today than it did two years ago. The U.S. Agency for International Development closed last year, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio explained the thinking behind that decision at the time: assistance had drifted from its purpose, and it needed to be brought closer to U.S. interests with clearer lines of accountability to Congress and the White House. A survey released this summer found that 54 percent of Americans across party lines still view foreign assistance favorably a year after USAID closed, and 8 in 10, Republicans and Democrats alike, said the better path is to reform and strengthen assistance programs rather than end them.

That is why I recently joined the new Commission on the Future of Foreign Assistance, launched by the Rockefeller Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, with research support from the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution. Our ten-member commission, co-chaired by former Gov. David Beasley and former Sen. Ben Cardin, will spend the next year putting together a workable plan for how the United States delivers assistance abroad and how that work keeps America in a leading position in the world.

I spent 26 years in Congress, in the House and the Senate, including service on the Senate Appropriations Committee. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, and as a member of the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, I worked with members of both parties to protect funding for global health security programs, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which has saved millions of lives. I also led hearings on the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the same disease this commission's own polling shows is shaping how Americans think about foreign assistance today. That is the kind of assistance I believe works. It is targeted, it is accountable to taxpayers, and it is tied clearly to America's security and economic interests.

This commission brings together Republicans and Democrats who do not agree on everything but agree that a rebuilt system needs to meet that standard, one that keeps the United States leading abroad rather than stepping back and leaving that role to others. I have spent my career finding agreement where it does not come easily. That is the job ahead of this commission, and I am ready to get to work with my colleagues.

Senator Roy Blunt represented Missouri in the U.S. House and Senate for 26 years. He now serves as Chairman of [HBS Leadership Strategies Advisory Services](#).

— SENATOR ROY BLUNT · CHAIRMAN, HBS LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

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THREE POINTS THAT MATTER

01 Foreign assistance needs to be rebuilt, not abandoned.

A year after USAID's closure, 8 in 10 Americans — across party lines — say the answer is reform, not elimination.

02 The standard is accountability.

Assistance should be targeted, accountable to taxpayers, and tied clearly to America's security and economic interests.

03 Rebuilding it well keeps America leading.

A stronger system is what keeps the U.S. in a leading role in the world — not a retreat from it.

