

*Bi-Partisan Water for the World Act sets ambitious goal of providing 100 million safe water and sanitation by 2015*

**Washington, DC** – Today, Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Donald Payne (D-N.J.) introduced the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2009. This legislation will empower the U.S. Government to address global environmental, poverty, and security threats presented by inadequately managed freshwater supplies. Sustainable global water and access to sanitation is vital to long-term diplomatic and development efforts. The Water for the World Act would both expand US foreign assistance capacity and prioritize policy coordination within the US Government.

Today, one-fifth of the world's population relies on freshwater that is either polluted or significantly overdrawn. Building upon the landmark Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005, this bill sets an ambitious, but achievable, goal of providing 100 million of the world's poorest with sustainable drinking water and sanitation by 2015.

“Right now, a lack of safe water and sanitation accounts for 2 million needless deaths a year and half the illness in the developing world. Safe water and sanitation is a security issue, a health issue, an environmental issue, and a human rights issue. It cuts to the heart of our international work and investment here yields staggering results,” said Rep. Blumenauer. “Innovative partnerships between governments, NGOs, businesses, and local partners have accomplished a great deal with scarce resources, but nearly 900 million people worldwide still lack access to safe drinking water and two out of five people still lack basic sanitation services. The Water for the World Act answers the call to act and helps build a healthier, safer, and more equitable future. As we mark the 39th Annual Earth Day, I am proud to once again join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in an ambitious and critical effort to alleviate poverty and increase global health and security.”

“The US must be serious about the role that sanitation and safe water plays in the development of countries around the world,” Congressman Payne exhorted. “As the US charts a new foreign policy course, it is vital to make decisions that take sanitation and safe water into consideration. In 2000, the U.S. committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which would make great strides towards combating such global ills as poverty, hunger and disease. Yet, without providing access to the billions of people who live without potable water and/or basic sanitation facilities, these goals will not be actualized. The Water for the World Act strengthens the mandate outlined in the 2005 landmark Water for the Poor Act.

Water for the World Act builds upon its predecessor by institutionalizing the role of safe water and sanitation in our foreign policy and by expanding its reach to an additional 100 million people. Due to the multiplier effect of investment in safe water and sanitation, the upshot of this bill will be monumental for billions of people around the world.”

Specifically, The Water for the World Act would establish an Office of Water within USAID to implement country-specific water strategies. It would also create a Special Coordinator for International Water within the State Department to coordinate the diplomatic policy of the US with respect to global freshwater issues, and establish programs in countries of greatest need that build local capacity, collaboration across borders and disciplines and promotes full utilization of low-cost technologies, such as hand washing stations and latrines.

The Water for the World Act is endorsed by a number of global health and environment advocates, including Water Advocates, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and CARE. Lead sponsors of the bill include Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), Donald Payne (D-N.J.), Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.), George Miller (D-Calif.), John Boozman (R-Ariz.), Dan Burton (R-Ind.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), and Zach Wamp (R-Tenn.). Companion legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Durbin (D-IL), Corker (R-TN), and Murray (D-WA).

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