

Washington, DC – With global water situation increasingly in crisis, Congressman Blumenauer has introduced the Water for the Poor Enhancement Act of 2008, with Representatives Donald Payne, Donald Manzullo, Sheila Jackson Lee, Chris Shays, George Miller, Steve LaTourette, and Walter Jones as original cosponsors. The Water for the Poor Enhancement Act complements legislation introduced in the Senate by Senator Richard Durbin.

“This legislation answers the call to act,” said Congressman Blumenauer. “The Water for the Poor Enhancement Act is a bipartisan, non-ideological approach to making our government more responsive to this crisis. It increases U.S. government capacity to coordinate and streamline clean water and sanitation development activities, and fosters strategic investments in on-the-ground expertise and low cost, high impact technologies.”

Every 15 seconds, a child dies from lack of access to safe water and sanitation. Across the globe, 900 million people live without access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion people are without access to improved sanitation. Millions of girls can’t go to school because they must spend hours walking to collect water for their families. As half of the people in the developing world are sick at any given time from a water-related disease, water and sanitation access is a major barrier to fighting poverty and increasing economic productivity.

The bill coordinates the USAID’s water activities with an Office of Water that develops safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation in developing countries. The bill also offers onsite training for local water and sanitation managers, and helps develop affordable technologies to ensure clean water access to countries with limited resources. Further, the bill expands the capacity of the State Department to oversee water issues as a part of U.S. diplomacy.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa the United States and 185 other countries agreed to the goal of cutting in half the percentage of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015. Congressman Blumenauer responded by working with Reps. Tom Lantos and Henry Hyde and Sens. Bill Frist and Harry Reid to enact the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005, which established water and sanitation as a cornerstone of United States foreign assistance efforts. “We are now halfway to the 2015 date, and we must redouble our efforts,” said Congressman Blumenauer, adding that by 2030, 4 billion people – almost half the world’s projected population – will live in water-stressed areas.

## **Blumenauer Introduces Water for the Poor Enhancement Act of 2008**

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“This legislation will help the US government pull together the pieces implement a smart and efficient global water strategy,” said Congressman Blumenauer. “Above all, it will help us meet our commitment to extend safe drinking water and sanitation to over a billion people in need.”