

As America prepares for the holiday season, it is important to pause and reflect on what we can do for others as well as ourselves. I hope that Congress will give a gift of life, health and hope by helping people around the world with something that most Americans take for granted: safe drinking water.

Nearly 900 million of the world's poorest don't have clean drinking water, and fully 2.6 billion lack access to improved sanitation. This shortfall poses a significant challenge for development and security around the world, reinforcing a cycle of poverty and instability that represents both a humanitarian disaster and a national security threat.

Water-related diseases are particularly brutal in how they target children: 90% of all deaths caused by diarrheal diseases are children under 5 years of age, mostly in developing countries. In all, 1.8 million children under the age of 5 die every year, more than from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. The economic impacts are devastating: inadequate sanitation in India alone costs that country \$53.8 billion, or 6.4 percent of its GDP every year.

What's more, dirty water directly affects every area of development. Children cannot attend school if they are sick from dirty water, and adults suffering from water-borne illnesses overwhelm hospitals and cannot go to work. Hours spent looking for and collecting clean water mean hours not spent adding to a family's economic well-being. In short, the best intentioned efforts at development fail if the basic necessity of clean water is not met.

In this period of good tidings, there is good news with water. The solution to this problem is cheap and relatively straightforward. We don't have to spend millions searching for a cure. Sometimes something as simple as teaching the value of hand washing, or providing access to technology we already have is all it takes to save millions of lives and increase economic development. What we lack is leadership and accountability.

It's time for Congress to act again. The Water for the World Act of 2012 builds on current U.S. efforts to provide those in need with greater access to clean water and sanitation. And in this period of tight budgets, it is important that the Water for the World Act doesn't ask for any increase in funding, but rather improves the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of international aid programs. Given the strains on federal resources and the depth of need, it is

essential that we are able to target our efforts more efficiently.

The Water for the World Act also gives the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development the tools needed to leverage the investments they are already making by elevating the current positions within the State Department and USAID to coordinate the diplomatic policy of the U.S. on global freshwater issues and to implement country-specific water strategies.

There is nothing more fundamental to the human condition and global health than access to clean water and sanitation. More needs to be done, and it needs to be done well. Taxpayers are rightly demanding better results and greater transparency from foreign aid. This bill provides the tools and incentives to do just that.