

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cochran, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We write today to express our urgent request for emergency funds in FY17 to address famine and food insecurity, particularly in South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia and Nigeria. Specifically, as you work to complete the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 spending bills, we request that you allocate \$1 billion in additional funding to address this crisis to bilateral and multilateral accounts, including at least \$400 million in International Disaster Assistance (IDA), allowing for the utmost speed and flexibility in providing critical aid to the areas most in need.

Across these countries, a total of 20 million people are facing starvation due to conflict and drought, comprising what the United Nations (UN) has called the "*largest humanitarian crisis*" since the organization was founded in 1945. An additional 50 million people are severely hungry, surviving day-to-day on only what they can find. Moreover, it is estimated that 1.4 million children in these four countries are acutely malnourished and at risk of death. The UN is calling on the international community to come together and pledge the \$4.4 billion needed by July to avert catastrophe.

On February 20th, famine was officially declared in two counties in South Sudan, where more than 100,000 people are starving and a further 5 million are at risk of starvation throughout the country. Ongoing conflict and limited access for aid workers are exacerbating the effects of a prolonged civil war and economic distress, which has led some 1.5 million people to flee the country since the conflict in South Sudan began in 2013. Now, 3,000 people are fleeing to neighboring Uganda *each day*, pushing that country to a "breaking point" according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

At the same time, at least 300,000 people face acute malnutrition in northeast Nigeria, where Boko Haram has terrorized communities and where farmers have been forced to flee their crops.

The largest humanitarian crisis is in Yemen, where more than half of the country's population is short of food, and more than 7 million people are in need urgent food assistance. The ongoing disastrous conflict has destroyed infrastructure, making it even harder to deliver aid and care for the sick and dying.

Lastly, in Somalia, close to 3 million people are at risk of famine due to the ongoing drought and violence. Other parts of East Africa including United States' strategic partners, Ethiopia and Kenya, are now on the brink of famine as well.

The USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) has warned that this year an estimated 70 million people across 45 countries will be in need of emergency food assistance, largely driven by persistent conflict, severe drought and economic instability.

While we understand that the demand is tremendous and we certainly cannot solve this crisis alone, swift U.S leadership is needed to mobilize other donors and the international community to provide the urgent funds needed to provide life-saving support assistance before it is too late.

This is not merely a moral issue, it is a security one. Unprecedented famine in four regions simultaneously will further exacerbate migration, resulting in more refugees, greater strain on states, and overall instability. Those are the conditions upon which terrorists thrive and which result in massive migration flows to Europe and other partner nations.

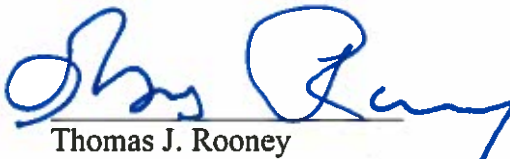
We must act now in order to save lives and avoid an exponential increase in malnutrition and deaths due to starvation. While aid alone will not solve the underlying issues that lead to famine, without additional resources immediately, more lives will be lost and we will witness greater instability in these critical regions.

The price of inaction far outweighs the cost of additional investment now. We urge you to consider this timely emergency funding request and look forward to working with you on this issue as you conclude FY17 and continue on to the FY18 budget.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



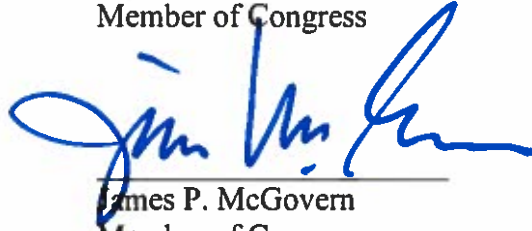
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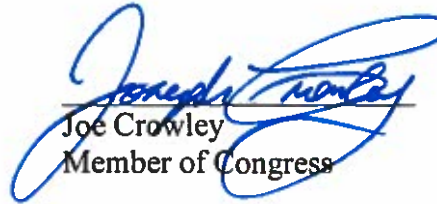


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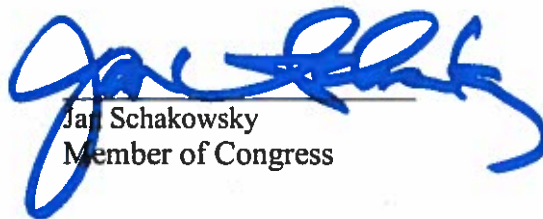

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