

[DATE]

The Honorable [first and last name]  
[address]  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator / Representative [last name]:

Every day, 3,900 children die because of dirty water, poor hygiene, and lack of basic sanitation while 1.6 million other deaths per year can be attributed to the same causes. Yet this same access to safe drinking water and sanitation is essential to successful treatment of AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, as well as addressing malnutrition and education.

The U.N. Development Program has stated unequivocally that water scarcity is due to human fault. – a product of a “water apartheid” where the financial support for water infrastructure does not benefit the poor. In 2002 the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights recognized the need for equitable access by declaring that the right to water is a fundamental human right. *This right entitles individuals to sufficient, safe, accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use.*

In 2005, Congress passed the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act (P.L. 109-121), which made safe water and sanitation in the developing world an official U.S. foreign policy goal, formally incorporating these crucial human rights objectives into U.S. law and renewing America’s commitment to this important cause.

Last year, Congress ensured that the State Department and USAID would implement the Water for the Poor Act by incorporating statutory language restricting funding to projects with direct benefit for the poor. Repeating this language in the FY ’09 appropriations is the best way to ensure that the money goes where it is most needed and that affected countries will be able to make the human right to water an effective right.

As your constituent, I urge you to adopt the strong language from last year’s appropriations. To weaken the language in ’09 would dilute efforts to bring sustainable access to safe water and sanitation to those who need it. Please ensure that last year’s statutory language tying funding to projects that benefit the poor is used again. It is time for countries to fully recognize the human right to water, and provide foreign aid that will make it possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Your Name