

\$845 Billion at Stake

Obama's Global Tax Proposal Up for Senate Vote

A nice-sounding bill called the "Global Poverty Act," sponsored by Democratic presidential candidate and Senator Barack Obama, is up for a Senate vote on Thursday, February 14, and could result in the imposition of a global tax on the United States. The bill, which has the support of many liberal religious groups, makes levels of U.S. foreign aid spending subservient to the dictates of the United Nations.

THE GLOBAL POVERTY ACT

Senator Joe Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has not endorsed either Senator Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton in the presidential race. But on Thursday, February 14, he is trying to rush Obama's "Global Poverty Act" (S.2433) through his committee. The legislation would commit the U.S. to spending 0.7 percent of gross national product on foreign aid, which amounts to a phenomenal 13-year total of \$845 billion over and above what the U.S. already spends.

The bill, which is item number four on the committee's business meeting agenda, passed the House by a voice vote last year because most members didn't realize what was in it. Congressional sponsors have been careful not to calculate the amount of foreign aid spending that it would require. According to the web site of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, no hearings have been held on the Obama bill in that body.

A release from the Obama Senate office about the bill declares, "In 2000, the U.S. joined more than 180 countries at the United Nations Millennium Summit and vowed to reduce global poverty by 2015. We are halfway towards this deadline, and it is time the United States makes it a priority of our foreign policy to meet this goal and help those who are struggling day to day."



Jeffrey Sachs says the U.S. owes \$845 billion under the U.N.'s Millennium Goals.

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The legislation itself requires the President “to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to further the United States foreign policy objective of promoting the reduction of global poverty, the elimination of extreme global poverty, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by one-half the proportion of people worldwide, between 1990 and 2015, who live on less than \$1 per day.”



The bill defines the term “Millennium Development Goals” as the goals set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution 55/2 (2000).

The U.N. says that, “The commitment to provide 0.7% of gross national product (GNP) as official development assistance was first made 35 years ago in a General Assembly resolution, but it has been reaffirmed repeatedly over the years, including at the 2002 global Financing for Development conference in Monterrey, Mexico. However, in 2004, total aid from the industrialized countries totaled just \$78.6 billion —or about 0.25% of their collective GNP.”

In addition to seeking to eradicate poverty, that declaration commits nations to banning “small arms and light weapons” and ratifying a series of treaties, including the International Criminal Court Treaty, the Kyoto Protocol (global warming treaty), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Senators Lugar and Obama

The Millennium Declaration also affirms the U.N. as “the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development.”

Jeffrey Sachs, who runs the U.N.’s “Millennium Project,” says that the U.N. plan to force the U.S. to pay 0.7 percent of GNP in increased foreign aid spending would add \$65 billion a year to what the U.S. already spends. Over a 13 year period, from 2002, when the U.N.’s Financing for Development conference was held, to the target year of 2015, when the U.S. is expected to meet the “Millennium Development Goals,” this amounts to \$845 billion. And the only way to raise that kind of money, Sachs has written, is through a global tax, preferably on carbon-emitting fossil fuels.

Obama's bill has only 6 co-sponsors. They are Senators Maria Cantwell, Dianne Feinstein, Richard Lugar, Richard Durbin, Chuck Hagel and Robert Menendez. But it appears that Biden and Obama see passage of this bill as a way to highlight Democratic Party priorities in the Senate.

The House version (H.R. 1302), sponsored by Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), had only 84 co-sponsors before it was suddenly brought up on the House floor last September 25 and was passed by voice vote. House Republicans were caught off-guard, unaware that the pro-U.N. measure committed the U.S. to spending hundreds of billions of dollars.

It appears the Senate version is being pushed not only by Biden and Obama, a member of the committee, but Lugar, the ranking Republican member. Lugar has worked with Obama in the past to promote more foreign aid for Russia, supposedly to stem nuclear proliferation, and has become Obama's mentor. Like Biden, Lugar is a globalist. They have both promoted passage of the U.N.'s Law of the Sea Treaty, for example.



The so-called "Lugar-Obama initiative" was modeled after the Nunn-Lugar program, also known as the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, which was designed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union. But one defense analyst, Rich Kelly, noted evidence that "CTR funds have eased the Russian military's budgetary woes, freeing resources for such initiatives as the war in Chechnya and defense modernization." He recommended that Congress "eliminate CTR funding so that it does not finance additional, perhaps more threatening, programs in the former Soviet Union." However, over \$6 billion has already been spent on the program.

Another program modeled on Nunn-Lugar, the Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention (IPP), was recently exposed as having funded nuclear projects in Iran through Russia.

More foreign aid through passage of the Global Poverty Act was identified as one of the strategic goals of InterAction, the alliance of U.S.- based international non-governmental organizations that lobbies for more foreign aid. The group is heavily financed by the U.S. Government, having received \$1.4 million from taxpayers in fiscal year



Senators Biden and Obama

2005 and \$1.7 million in 2006. However, InterAction recently issued a report accusing the United States of “falling short on its commitment to rid the world of dire poverty by 2015 under the U.N. Millennium Development Goals...”

It’s not clear what President Bush would do if the bill passes the Senate. The bill itself quotes Bush as declaring that, “We fight against poverty because opportunity is a fundamental right to human dignity.” Bush’s former top aide, Michael J. Gerson, writes in his new book, *Heroic Conservatism*, that Bush should be remembered as the president who “sponsored the largest percentage increases in foreign assistance since the Marshall Plan...”

Even these increases, however, will not be enough to satisfy the requirements of the Obama bill. A global tax will clearly be necessary to force American taxpayers to provide the money.

| Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, <u>110th Congress</u> | |
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| Democrats: | Republicans: |
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