



Senator Paul: Why Not Fund Disaster Relief With Foreign Aid Money?

“My amendment, the ‘America First’ amendment, would take the money from money that we were going to send to foreign countries,” in order to pay for disaster relief in the United States, explained Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.). “We send billions and billions of dollars to countries who hate us. We send billions and billions of dollars to countries who burn our flag. I think it’s a very simple choice that when we’re looking at those in need in our country, we quit sending money to other countries.”



Paul’s amendment was a reaction to the proposals for the U.S. government to go even deeper into debt to aid in the disaster of Hurricane Harvey. Instead of taking on even more debt, Paul contends, why not just cut the amount of the American taxpayers’ dollars that go to foreign governments, which include dictatorships, many of whom hate the United States.

Apparently, few senators agree with Paul that helping Americans without going into debt is as important as keeping the levels of foreign aid where they are. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Paul’s fellow Republican senator from the Bluegrass State, made a motion last week to table (kill) Paul’s reasonable proposal, and that motion passed 87-10.

Paul’s amendment would have allocated \$7.85 billion in aid to help in relief of the devastation brought on by Hurricane Harvey, which hit the Gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana, and \$2.5 billion for damage expected from Hurricane Irma, which began hitting the western coast of Florida over the weekend. The senator argued that no reason exists to increase the national debt when the money can be taken from the foreign aid budget.

Many people put their expenses on a credit card, but credit cards have debt limits; such people do not have the option of simply raising their card’s debt limit when faced with unexpected expenses, as the federal government does every few months. So, when a family encounters unexpected expenses, they either take the money out of savings, or cut spending elsewhere to pay for it. They certainly don’t often take on debt to send their money to foreign dictators.

“In Washington, we have a disease — or a syndrome, rather. I call it the ‘dinosaur syndrome,’ big hearts, small brains,” Paul lamented in a speech last week on the floor of the Senate. “Unfortunately, it’s a reoccurring problem. Year after year, bill after bill, day after day. In Washington, it is argued that you are more compassionate if you give away more of someone else’s money. I would argue that true compassion is in giving your own money away. I would argue truly rational policy is giving away money that you have. So, it’s one thing to give away other people’s money, it’s another thing to give away money that you don’t even possess.”

As an example, Paul pointed to the foreign aid the U.S. has spent in “nation-building” in Afghanistan. President Donald Trump, in yet another reversal of his campaign promises, has promised to continue



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on September 11, 2017

the war in Afghanistan — now the longest war in American history. “We spend billions of dollars — I think it’s over \$100 billion — building roads in Afghanistan, blowing up roads in Afghanistan, building schools, blowing up schools, and then rebuilding all of them. Sometimes we blow them up, sometimes someone else blows them up, but we always go back and rebuild them. What about rebuilding our country?”

Trillions of dollars in taxpayer money have been given away around the world in foreign aid, since the Second World War. At one time, the argument was that this was needed because of the “Cold War” — the effort to keep a country from “going communist” — but even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the foreign aid budget has only increased.

What has the United States gained for all of this expenditure of national treasure? Is America more loved around the world? Can we really “buy” friends with all of this foreign aid? Much American blood and wealth was given in an unsuccessful attempt to “make South Vietnam a showcase for democracy in Asia,” followed by another unsuccessful attempt to “make Iraq a showcase for democracy in the Middle East,” but the doomed efforts to change foreign nations with American money goes on and on.

It must be understood that much of the foreign aid has been spent to prop up foreign dictators. Little of the money actually helps the average person in the receiving country. And, often this foreign aid actually causes so much disruption to the receiving nation’s economy that it leads to social and political unrest in that country.

And, it should be noted, there is no provision in the U.S. Constitution to take money from Americans and give it to foreigners, whatever the reason and results.

What the rejection of Senator Paul’s amendment illustrates, however, is that the forces inside the United States who benefit from continued foreign aid are so powerful that the giving away of American wealth — even if the country must go deeper into debt — will continue, despite the great unpopularity of foreign aid with the American public.

In essence, foreign aid is a redistribution of American wealth in socialist fashion to many socialist countries around the world. What those countries really need, as does America, is to allow the free market create wealth, rather than redistribute it.

Photo of Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.): AP Images



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