

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the House passed H.R. 2410, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which boosts funding for critical diplomacy, defense and international development programs. Representative Xavier Becerra, Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus and senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, voted for the bill.

“For too many years our diplomacy and development efforts were severely neglected by the previous administration, just as the need for robust diplomacy was needed most,” Rep. Becerra said. “This bill builds on President Obama’s efforts to reach out and rebuild our relationships around the world by reinvigorating our civilian diplomacy and development programs. America will enjoy an enormous return-on-investment through the strengthened alliances, enhanced security, and improved international good will that these efforts will yield.”

Among its provisions, the bill strengthens U.S. diplomatic efforts by boosting State Department staff and capabilities. Specifically, it addresses the understaffing of many overseas posts by authorizing the hiring and training of 1,500 new Foreign Service Officers by the State Department and 700 at the Agency for International Development over the next two years. In addition, the bill substantially increases the budget for the Peace Corps to support President Obama’s goal of doubling the number of Peace Corps volunteers.

The legislation also enhances efforts to fight international drug cartels by strengthening the “Merida Initiative,” an agreement reached by President Bush and Mexico in 2007 pledging U.S. assistance to the Mexican Government’s fight against the cartels. The bill requires the President to designate a “Merida Coordinator” at the State Department, with the rank of ambassador, to track and oversee all Merida related anti-cartel efforts throughout the agencies of the federal government. It also incorporates Caribbean nations into the initiative.

In addition, it will provide funds to help bolster arms control and nonproliferation capabilities at the State Department, creating new staff positions, giving additional authority to the Secretary of State under the Arms Control and Disarmament Act, and establishing a scholarship program to encourage students to pursue careers in international security and nonproliferation. It also requires the President to conduct a comprehensive and systematic review of the U.S. arms control system to ensure that it meets American foreign policy and national security needs.

Other provisions include full funding of our commitments to the United Nations and other

BECERRA VOTES TO BOOST INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

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international organizations, the creation of a new foundation to help American students study abroad, and increased resources for the enforcement of intellectual property rights. In total, the bill authorizes \$18 billion for State Department, Peace Corp, and other diplomacy and foreign affairs programs, matching the levels proposed in the Obama Administration's fiscal year 2010 budget request.

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