



# PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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*Senate Appropriations Committee*  
**Markup of the Fiscal Year 2009 State and Foreign Operations Bill**  
Thursday, July 17, 2008, 2:00 pm

The Senate Appropriations Committee held a session to markup three of the annual appropriations bills for FY09: State and Foreign Operations, Agriculture, and Defense. The bill for State and Foreign Operations was considered quickly with little discussion. It provides \$36.62 billion in discretionary funding, a \$3.62 increase over FY08 levels. The main area of funding that was addressed during the markup was the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), for which the committee granted sharply decreased funding. The full details of the bill were not yet made available to the public, although a summary of key points is available [on the website](#) of the appropriations committee.

**Committee Chairman Byrd** (D-WV) opened the session by describing the three appropriations bills to be considered as important for the nation and urging their passage as soon as possible. **Ranking Member Cochran** (R-MS) asserted that the State and Foreign Ops bill helps the U.S. pursue its national interests abroad, helps raise the standard of life of many abroad, and should be passed quickly.

The committee then held a roll call vote on giving favorable approval to the bill, subject to amendment. The bill passed with 28 voting yes, and **Sen. Brownback** (R-KS) the only no vote, which he cast in opposition to funding for the UN Population Fund, which he criticized for provided funding to programs in countries that use forced abortions.

**Sen. Leahy** (D-VT) praised the bill for having no earmarks and for providing additional funds for UN peacekeeping operations. Senator Leahy then spoke of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which he described as an innovative foreign assistance plan with bipartisan support. However, he noted that MCC has not yet spent most of the funds allocated by Congress since 2004 and stated that \$254 million would be granted to MCC for administrative costs. This is only a small fraction of the \$2.25 billion requested by President Bush, and a sharp decrease over previous years, as the MCC has received \$1 billion or more from Congress each year since its inception in FY 2004. Leahy added that Congress supports the current MCC compacts already negotiated, but that those funds must be disbursed before Congress grants additional funding.

**Sen. Gregg** (R-NH) stated his support for MCC and that it addressed key development issues. He expressed support for the MCC's programs in Jordan, which he described as a reliable ally of the United States that is currently being overwhelmed with refugees.

**Sen. Mikulski** (D-MD) stated the bill helps American standing in the world through public diplomacy.

**Sen. Bennett** (R-UT) said that the bill was very important and believed that the MCC was a valuable program.