

[Draft e-mail]

Subject: New Opportunity to Build Support for the UN in Congress

Dear UNA Chapter Presidents, Advocacy Chairs, and Executive Directors,

We're writing you about an immediate and unusual opportunity for your chapter to give a significant boost to building support for the United Nations in Congress. You can do so by urging your Representative to join the newly formed American Engagement Caucus during the next two weeks, so that we can enlarge participation in the Caucus before its official launch in mid-December.

Background: Congressional caucuses are groups of Members who share a common interest and want to help promote that interest through educating their fellow Members and through legislative action, proposing good legislation and opposing bad. There are many such caucuses in the House of Representatives, and some years back there was a United Nations Caucus that mobilized support for clearing up U.S. arrears to the UN. A couple of years ago UNA encouraged the revival of this caucus – which had become defunct – under new leadership. In 2008, during UNA's annual "Day on the Hill," delegations from many chapters urged their Members of Congress to join the caucus.

These efforts did not yield immediate results, but last month, with the assistance of the United Nations Foundation's Better World Campaign, a new caucus finally came into being. Calling itself the American Engagement Caucus, it seeks to bring together House Members interested in the vital role the United States can play in strengthening the international institutions that are essential to an effective response to today's global challenges.

Although the caucus, as its name suggests, may deal with some issues not directly related to the United Nations, support for the UN is a core purpose of the new group. Its Co-Chairs, Democrat Russ Carnahan of Missouri and Republican Anh Cao of Louisiana, have sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to all Members of the House inviting their participation in the caucus. But so far only a handful of Members – listed below – have actually joined.

As we all know, most Members of Congress, like most Americans, hold a generally supportive view of the United Nations. But many are woefully uninformed about what the United Nations does, why it is important, and how the United States can provide cooperative leadership to the world body. So their commitment to the UN is weak. Participation in the American Engagement Caucus – which will offer special briefings on the UN with U.S. Government and UN officials – would be an important step forward in widening their understanding and building their support. To bring this about, experience tells us that messages from constituents are the best way of encouraging them to join the Caucus.

Action: We are asking that you contact your Representative in Congress by December 2 to urge him or her to join the American Engagement Caucus. The reason for the December 2 deadline is that we want to build a significant membership in the Caucus before it is publicly launched in mid- December.

Before contacting your Representative, please let us know that you intend to do so. We will then send you a copy of the “Dear Colleague” letter and accompanying talking points, as well as information about your Member’s legislative assistant who handles international matters.

You may reply to either of us at 202-462-3446 by phone or at aaveryt@unausa.org or aerice@comcast.net by e-mail.

We look forward to hearing from you as we all take advantage of this unusual opportunity to work together to build a support group for the United Nations within Congress.

Your advocacy team,

Alan Averyt and Andy Rice

Initial members of the American Engagement Caucus

Anh Cao (LA)
Russ Carnahan (MO)
Brad Miller (NC)
David Price (NC)
Laura Richardson (CA)