

Riley, Wilkins: Investing in Smart Power Helps U.S., S.C.

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During such difficult economic times, it would be easy for South Carolinians to focus only on what is happening here at home. The world outside of the United States can seem very far away, but investments in other nations have never been as crucial as they are today to South Carolina's economy and to our security.

The world has changed since 9/11, and the global challenges we face require not only a strong defense but also effective development and diplomacy programs. This approach has come to be known as "smart power," where we use our tools of development and diplomacy along with a strong defense to respond to the challenges abroad in a more effective, coordinated fashion.

This is not a Democratic or Republican issue, but an American one. Our congressional delegation has a chance to make a real difference for South Carolina by showcasing the strong bipartisan support that exists for smart power and why these programs are in our communities' and nation's self-interest.

So how does smart power help South Carolina? First, it is an economic benefit. Our state is growing more reliant on international trade every year. In 2008, South Carolina exported goods to foreign markets generating revenues that totaled almost \$20 billion. In 2006, international trade supported more than 403,000 jobs in South Carolina- more than 17 percent of total jobs in our state. Given that developing countries are America's fastest growing markets, representing 40 percent of U.S. exports, it is critical that our country invests overseas to enhance and build marketplaces for S.C. goods.

Assisting countries around the world also ensures stable societies that provide real opportunities for people, which prevents conflict before it even begins. That is why one of the greatest proponents of using smart power is Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

Secretary Gates has said, "One of the most important lessons of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that military success is not sufficient to win: Economic development, institution-building and the rule of law, promoting internal reconciliation, good governance, providing basic services to the people, training and equipping indigenous military and police forces, strategic communications, and more - these, along with security, are essential ingredients for long-term success."

Secretary Gates is not alone in his assessment. More than 50 retired senior military leaders wrote President Obama encouraging him to increase the international affairs budget, the small but important part of the federal budget that funds crucial investments in development and diplomacy.

In addition to benefiting our economy and helping to keep us safe, providing assistance to nations around the world also demonstrates the generosity of the American people and shows our humanitarian values as a people. Over the past weeks we have seen the outpouring of generosity from our nation in response to the tragic earthquake in Haiti. Helping our neighbors in need is the right thing to do, and this example of America's goodness goes a long way in today's world.

The international affairs budget is 1 percent of the entire federal budget. Just 1 percent for programs that provide life-saving HIV/AIDS treatment, famine relief and export assistance for U.S. businesses. In fact, all of our foreign service officers in the world would barely be enough to staff one aircraft carrier.

The safer and more stable other countries are, the more prosperous and secure we will be here at home. That is why we are proud to serve as the bipartisan state co-chairs of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition - an organization dedicated to putting smart power to work through a strong international affairs budget and enhancing our nation's civilian engagement with the rest of the world.

We need an enhanced commitment to development and diplomacy, and sufficient funding to make it a reality. Our hope is that South Carolina's leaders will recognize just how important the international affairs budget is for our state. If Democrats and Republicans start putting smart power to work, we can go a long way to building a better, safer world and ensuring that South Carolina's future is more prosperous and secure.

Mr. Riley served as S.C. governor and U.S. Education secretary; Mr. Wilkins served as S.C. House speaker and U.S. ambassador to Canada. They co-chair the S.C. Advisory Committee of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition.