

International assistance cuts are hurting Oklahoma's trade and economic future

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Our governmental programs are not always efficient, we must also bear in mind that the quest for efficiency can sometimes lead to negative outcomes as well.

Oklahoma's farmers, businesses and manufacturers are heavily engaged in the global economy, as are our Native American Nations. Therefore, we must think deeply before cutting back on our international assistance programs.

Reductions in foreign assistance programs aren't just numbers on a federal budget. They are felt directly on Oklahoma's Main Streets and in our Native American Communities through lost trade opportunities, diminished foreign investment and weakened partnerships that take years to cultivate but can be lost in an instant.

Oklahoma has a strong export market and a growing presence in international business. However, if the United States loses its influence abroad, it could threaten not only Oklahoma's economy but the prosperity of its people.

With industries ranging from agriculture to aerospace, Oklahomans benefit enormously from trade partnerships with countries around the world. In fact, in 2024 alone, Oklahoma's exports totaled \$6.3 billion. These exports don't just support local businesses; they sustain thousands of jobs in communities across the state.

The engine driving this trade is not just the quality of Oklahoma's goods and services but the diplomatic work that facilitates these relationships.

International assistance cuts are making it harder for companies in Oklahoma to reach growing markets. As the U.S. reduces its support for economic



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development and diplomacy, competing countries, including China, are filling the void.

Our adversaries have the resources and the will to promote their own trade relationships in emerging markets — markets that Oklahoma has worked hard to cultivate for years. If this trend continues, many Oklahoman businesses will find themselves struggling to maintain their competitive edge, which could lead to significant job losses.

Foreign investors are also keenly aware of the level of international cooperation a country offers. The United States' international assistance programs have been a powerful soft power tool in fostering conditions for foreign investments in American companies.

Foreign aid initiatives, such as development projects that enhance infrastructure, support social stability and minimize conflicts, have helped to create an environment where foreign businesses feel confident in making investments. Without these programs, the United States risks becoming less attractive to international investors, and Oklahoma businesses will feel the impacts as competing nations step in with their own support mechanisms for economic growth.

Consider the aerospace sector in Oklahoma, which is supported by many

of our Native American Companies and has benefited from international partnerships that have allowed the state to become a key player in global aviation. The relationships that foreign aid programs provide help connect Oklahoma aerospace companies with global partners and provide the foundation for collaboration. Without this support, the state's ability to attract investment in this quickly growing industry could stagnate, costing jobs and stifling innovation.

I agree that reforms to our existing international assistance programs are essential. When done correctly, we can act with precision to ensure we have the smart, strategic international presence we need to protect and promote America's interests and counter our rivals.

However, cutting the programs that support Oklahoma's growing industries and help build global partnerships for Oklahoma-made products is a mistake that could have long-lasting consequences for our businesses and families.

International assistance is an investment in our economic future. We don't need to spend more. We just need to spend smarter. Through targeted, high-impact projects that protect our interests, we can secure Oklahoma's future and ensure continued prosperity for our communities.

We need to advocate for a stronger, not weaker, international presence that allows both America, Oklahoma and our Tribal Nations to win.

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