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April 19, 2012

The Honorable Rajiv Shah
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Dr. Shah,

We are writing in response to the second instance in less than two years of an alarming report that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is actively funding the training of foreign workers for call center jobs outsourced by American companies. These reports are extraordinarily distressing given the fragile state of the recovering American labor force and the trend towards outsourcing call center jobs overseas by corporate bad actors.

As you remember from our correspondence in August 2010, we vehemently object to the use of American taxpayer dollars for international development projects that weaken our domestic workforce. USAID suspended its outsourcing training program in 2010 after we objected to the agency's proposal to allocate $10 million toward the enrollment of 3,000 Sri Lankan nationals in high-tech skills development programs.

At that time, USAID committed to "*conduct a review to ensure the project will not take any jobs away from Americans*" consistent with President Bush's 2003 policy directives. we believe it was reasonable to conclude from that statement that your agency's outsourcing training program was terminated, particularly in light of President Obama's "insourcing" initiative announced earlier this year. Therefore, we were shocked to learn that USAID is currently investing taxpayer dollars in outsourcing training programs in the Philippines at the expense of American workers.

As you may know, over 500,000 call center jobs have been outsourced from the United States to foreign shores since 2007. To essentially underwrite our international competitors is short-sighted public policy and a direct threat to our economic competitiveness. Call centers represent a substantial portion of the American economy and currently provide economic stability and the promise of a middle-class income to over 4.5 million working families in the United States.

Furthermore, outsourcing call center activities elevates the risk to the security of sensitive consumer data and the privacy of millions of American consumers. For instance, recent reports from India and the Philippines have exposed hundreds of cases involving unscrupulous call center workers attempting to sell credit card numbers, medical records, and loan data to undercover journalists. Most recently, the FTC reported its discovery of a payday scam based out of Indian call centers that had defrauded American consumers of $5.2 million in less than two years.

We cannot support the use of federal taxpayer dollars for outsourcing training programs that conflict directly with the Administration's stated policy of repatriating American jobs from overseas and we demand that this ill-advised project be discontinued immediately. You can be assured that we will use every legislative option available to permanently prohibit USAID from engaging in such practices in the future and therefore encourage you to assert your leadership to resolve this matter internally and without delay.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress

Walter Jones
Member of Congress