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February 1, 2005

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The survivors of the earthquake and tsunami that struck South Asia on December 26, 2004, have lost their homes and possessions and find themselves in dire need of essentials such as food, clean water, medical attention, and shelter. Over the past several decades, U.S. food aid programs run by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have demonstrated their capacity to help people in need, but their fiscal year 2005 funding levels will have to be increased for them to do the job properly.

As part of the supplemental appropriations bill you are planning to submit within the next several weeks to cover the cost of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, we urge you to include a request for food aid programs to help the earthquake and tsunami victims in South Asia as well as to address the food aid shortfall generated by pre-existing emergency assistance needs in Africa and elsewhere in the world. A portion of that money should be used to replenish recent withdrawals from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust.

It is crucial that you take these steps and not attempt to meet emergency needs by cutting existing programs. We believe that previous cuts made to developmental food aid programs in this fiscal year should be restored. It would not be appropriate to help the people in regions affected by emergencies by reducing aid to people in other developing countries. We urge you to consider carefully this situation and to take whatever actions are necessary to ensure our ability to meet all our food aid commitments.

Sincerely,

IKE SKELTON
Member of Congress

JO ANN EMERSON
Member of Congress

JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress

JERRY MORAN
Member of Congress

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