



## **Bill Summary: United States–Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act**

Representatives Michael McCaul (R- Texas) and Eliot L. Engel (D- New Jersey) [introduced](#) the United States–Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act, or [H.R. 2615](#), on May 9, 2019. The bill seeks to address the root causes of migration from the three Northern Triangle countries - El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

It would provide irrevocable foreign aid for fiscal year (FY) 2020 to the Northern Triangle nations, which are collectively the [most common](#) countries of origin of migrants currently [arriving](#) at the U.S. Southern Border, and set conditions for assistance extended to these countries' governments. Also, it would direct U.S. officials to encourage economic growth and development, combat corruption, strengthen democratic institutions and improve security conditions in the region.

The United States–Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act would:

- Require the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other relevant Federal agencies authorities to develop a report on the root causes of migration from each of the Northern Triangle countries and the progress United States foreign assistance is making in addressing these causes. The report would include information about all criminal activities, including drug and human trafficking and extortion and gender-based violence, and to what extent crimes were reported and perpetrators were investigated.
- Direct the Secretary of State, USAID Administrator, and other authorities to develop multi-year strategies to:
  - Support inclusive economic growth and development in the Northern Triangle countries by reinforcing market-based solutions to eliminate constraints to inclusive economic growth; addressing poverty and inequality and responding to immediate humanitarian needs; strengthening community resilience and preparedness for natural disasters and other external shocks; and other activities;
  - Combat corruption in the Northern Triangle countries by supporting anti-corruption efforts, including strengthening national justice systems and attorneys general through bilateral assistance; as well as implementing transparent, merit-based selection processes for prosecutors and judges; and other initiatives;
  - Support democratic governance in the Northern Triangle countries by initiatives such as strengthening the countries' electoral institutions and processes to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections; increasing nationals' access to information, as well as strengthening an independent media; and training political actors committed to democratic principles; and
  - Prioritize the improvement of security in the Northern Triangle countries by supporting efforts to combat criminal gangs and transnational criminal organizations; providing equipment, technology, tools, and training to assist in

border and port inspections and counter-narcotics; continuing information sharing regarding known or suspected terrorists; and other initiatives.

- As part of the strategies, require the Secretary of State, Administrator of USAID, and other authorities to develop specific benchmarks for addressing causes of migration from the region and a public diplomacy strategy to educate the Northern Triangle citizens about available U.S. assistance as well as risks of unauthorized migration to the U.S. These authorities would report annually to Congress about progress in meeting these criteria.
- Authorize \$577 million in foreign aid for FY 2020 to implement the U.S. strategy addressing root causes of migration in the three affected Northern Triangle countries. The bill would prohibit these funds from being reprogrammed, transferred or rescinded.
  - Each of the Northern Triangle's central governments would receive half of the money authorized for their country after the U.S. Secretary of State acknowledges progress in implementing the strategy.
  - The rest of the money would be provided to organizations and programs in the three countries that do not directly support their central governments.
- Increase engagement with the Mexican government on matters related to the Northern Triangle by requiring the U.S. Secretary of State and various executive branch agencies to support economic development in southern Mexico and strengthen U.S. cooperation with the Mexican government around its shared border with Guatemala and Belize.
- Ban visas to and freeze assets of individuals engaged in corruption in the three Northern Triangle nations, including private citizens, public officials as well as residents of other countries involved in such activities in the region.
- Require the Trump administration to provide Congress with advance notice and rationale for any additional funds provided to assist the Northern Triangle countries during the first three years after enactment of the bill.