

**Statement of Ambassador John O’Keefe  
Executive Director  
Open World Leadership Center  
For the Legislative Branch Subcommittee  
Of the Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
March 1, 2012**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Hoeven, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony on the Open World Leadership Center’s budget request for fiscal year 2013. The Center, of which I am the Executive Director, conducts the only foreign-visitor exchange program in the U.S. Legislative Branch. Congressional participation in our programs and on our governing board has made Open World a uniquely effective instrument for Members, their constituents and communities around America. All of us at Open World are deeply grateful for your support.

**Overview**

The Open World program connects Congress to its constituents, who in turn practice public diplomacy on behalf of their elected officials. The net effect of these efforts is a deep and ongoing influence on the views and goals of the Open World delegates as they influence events in their own countries. With the power of the 2,000 communities throughout America that have participated over the life of the program, the Center enhances professional relationships and understanding between political and civic leaders of participating countries and their counterparts in the United States. It is designed to enable emerging young leaders from the selected countries to:

- observe U.S. government, business, volunteer, and community leaders carrying out their daily responsibilities;
- experience how the separation of powers, checks and balances, freedom of the press, and other key elements of America’s democratic system make the government more accountable and transparent;
- develop an understanding of the U.S. free enterprise system;
- learn how U.S. citizens organize and take initiative to address social and civic needs;
- participate in American family and community activities; and
- establish lasting professional and personal ties with their U.S. hosts and counterparts.

Because Open World provides such high-caliber programs, participants return to their countries with a tangible appreciation of America’s democracy and market economy. To that end, Open World has refined and focused on key themes central to democracy-building to improve the quality of the U.S. program. The impact of the 10-day U.S. stay is multiplied by continued post-visit communication between participants

and their American hosts, their fellow Open World alumni, and alumni of other U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs.

### **Open World Activities in 2012**

Open World's plans for calendar year 2012 include programs for Members of Parliament from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and regional and municipal legislators from Russia and Ukraine. We have expanded our rule of law program beyond Russia and Ukraine to include Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Serbia—countries where we are finding substantial cooperation and a slow, cautious movement toward an independent judiciary. We also continue to foster sister city/sister state programs in many locations in the United States that forge stronger ties between our countries.

The Center hosts in thematic areas that advance U.S. national interests, support American communities active in these areas, and generate concrete results. We will build on Open World's incremental and growing successes, and will continue to emphasize such topics as the rule of law, human trafficking prevention, education, health, and the legislative branch's role in bringing about good governance.

Our efficient stewardship of resources and programming attracted USAID to partner with and provide funding for Open World programs for Serbia in 2012. The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine co-funded telemedicine programs in the U.S. and the Civilian Research and Development Foundation co-sponsored a delegation of Russian researchers in nanotechnology. These are just a few examples of inter-agency collaborations that the Open World Leadership Center has accomplished due to our reputation for results and cost-effectiveness. In fact, every program hosted and sponsored by the Center has a partnership and cost share component at its core.

### **Open World Plans for 2013**

In 2013, in concert with the Board of Trustees-approved strategic plan, the Center has established a goal of bringing 30% of its delegates from the generation that has come of age since the breakup of the Soviet Union. This group differs from the previous generations both by its access to a greater range of information and, in some countries, a more nationalistic view of the world. To achieve this goal, we are developing a new group of nominators who will assist us in identifying emerging leaders of this rising generation. We are also seeking young professionals in the United States who will introduce these delegates to other young professionals in their communities.

As an agency created to serve Congress, Open World will also assist Members who wish to invite their legislative counterparts from these strategically critical nations. We will provide a means for Members on fact-finding missions abroad to extend invitations to key members of legislative bodies to see firsthand the working of U.S. legislatures, at both the national and state levels. To fulfill the mandate from our Board, we are developing a program for Uzbekistan and plan to have members of both chambers

of their Parliament as participants in 2013. We requested no increase in our appropriation and will fund this initiative through cost shares, savings and redistribution of resources.

### **Breadth and Depth of Open World Programming**

The Center regularly evaluates program performance to ensure that Open World is meeting its mission of focusing on a geographically and professionally broad cross-section of emerging leaders who might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit the United States:

- Since the program was established with Russia in 1999, the Open World program has now hosted emerging leaders from almost all the countries of the former Soviet bloc. The program added Ukraine in 2003. In 2007, Open World expanded to Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan. Open World's Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan programs began in 2008; its Armenia program was launched in 2011. In 2012, the program welcomed its first delegations from Serbia. Open World has also hosted delegations from Belarus, Lithuania, and Uzbekistan.
- Over 80 percent of Russian participants live outside Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- More than 60 percent of Open World delegates have been federal, regional, or local government officials at the time of their visit.
- 1,645 Russian and Ukrainian judges have been hosted in U.S. courts and communities as part of Open World visits focused on the rule of law. Another 145 judges from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have taken part in Open World rule of law programs.
- Open World has brought 155 members of the Russian Federation Council and State Duma to the United States. Members of the national parliaments of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine have also participated in the program. Of the Russian Duma members elected in December 2011, 27 are Open World alumni.
- Over 90 percent of delegates are first-time visitors to the United States.
- Over half of all delegates are women. (Women did not have significant leadership opportunities in the Soviet Union.)

## **Open World in America**

Open World delegates are hosted by a large and dedicated group of American citizens who live in cities, towns, and rural communities throughout the United States:

- Since Open World's inception in 1999, more than 7,100 families have hosted participants in 2,000 communities in all 50 states.
- In 2011, the 204 locally based Open World host organizations included universities and community colleges, library systems, Rotary clubs and other service organizations, sister-city associations, courts, and nonprofits.
- Over 150 U.S. federal and state judges have hosted their counterparts from Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

The generosity and enthusiasm of our American hosts is a mainstay of the program. For the 2012 grant proposal cycle, demand for hosting Open World delegations was up to three times the supply of available hosting slots. In 2010, Americans gave \$1.72 million worth of in-kind contributions to the Open World representing 34% of the total cost of the hosting program. Other partners provided an additional \$580,000 in in-kind contributions. We expect similar in-kind contributions for 2011 when final reporting is complete.

Visiting delegates, in turn, have enriched American communities by sharing ideas with their professional counterparts, university faculty and students, governors and state legislators, American war veterans, and other American citizens in a variety of forums such as group discussions, Rotary Club breakfasts, and town hall meetings.

In the past month alone, the Center has learned of the following partnerships and projects implemented through the Open World program or initiated and reported on by Open World alumni:

- In a significant development, the Center has learned that the leaders of the new opposition in Russia that emerged in December include Open World alumni.
- On February 17, 2012 a sister-city partnership was signed between the Ukrainian regional capital city of Uzhgorod and Little Rock, Arkansas. The agreement was signed by Mayor Mark Stodola and a Deputy of the Uzhgorod City Council, Vasyl Gnatkiv, a member of an Open World delegation visiting Little Rock to examine the role of legislatures in accountable governance.
- A Ukrainian television reporter established an investigative journalism NGO based on his observations of a student-journalist project at Carrolton College in Atlanta, Georgia, which he visited during his Open World exchange. The organization focuses on investigating and reporting on human rights violations. He is now turning his efforts to involving young, socially active Ukrainians in the

political and governing processes through an organization called “SAN” (Self-Governed Alternative Network). The Network plans to support candidates for the fall parliamentary elections.

- The southern Moldovan city of Cahul is benefiting from two projects initiated by an Open World alumnus, hosted in Madison, Wisconsin in 2009, who is both a city councilman and NGO administrator. The Cahul governmental authorities and local NGOs are collaborating on a project called “Cahul – Youth Capital of Moldova 2012” to promote activities for youth. The second project is supported by a grant from the U.S. Embassy and involves the establishment of a park between two housing projects, promoting its use for recreation, and encouraging volunteerism to maintain the park.
- Two Tajik Open World alumni, one hosted in Princeton, West Virginia and the other in St. Louis, were instrumental in the opening of “Window to America” and “American Corners” centers in their respective home cities. Both alumni worked with the local Tajik government to obtain rooms and other support for these learning centers that now bring to the local population both information about America and English language training through further support by the U.S. Embassy.

Results such as these solidify the importance of these countries’ participation in the Open World program. Furthermore, Open World provides on-going benefits to the U.S. economy through such activities as purchases of equipment in the U.S. by Open World alumni and follow-on exchange visits to the United States initiated by contacts made through Open World. An example of the latter is an education exchange for children from Nadezhdinskiy, Russia planned for this summer by Open World American hosts associated with People-to-People International in Scottsdale, Arizona. Besides learning English during their stay in Arizona, the group will visit Las Vegas, San Diego, and Los Angeles.

## Highlights of Calendar Year 2011 Programming

### **Parliamentary Hosting**

- The Open World program hosted the first delegation of members from the new Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, elected in October 2010. During their stay in Washington, DC, they met with numerous Members of Congress and observed a session of the House of Representatives, presented at a roundtable at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where they provided each of their political party's view of the only fully democratic country in the region. They were also hosted in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, PA where the delegates observed the legislative process at the city and state levels.
- In May 2011, Rep. Renee Ellmers (NC) served as the congressional host for two Moldovan parliamentarians examining accountable governance in the Raleigh area. The Moldovans had discussions with Rep. Ellmers and several state legislators about their duties and office operations; viewed state legislative proceedings; heard about the role of the state Secretary of State's office; and learned about the preservation of parliamentary documents and the state legislature's online resources. North Carolina and Moldova have a formal "sister state" relationship.
- The U.S. Mission in Ukraine turned to the Open World Program in September 2011 to host Parliamentarian Lesya Orobets and directly funded this hosting program. During her visit, Deputy Orobets met with Congressional Ukrainian Caucus Cochair Rep. Marcy Kaptur (OH) for a peer-to-peer conversation about economic development, current affairs, and representative government. Deputy Orobets chairs an education subcommittee and is fighting for greater transparency in the education system. She is also a pioneer in using social media to communicate with the Ukrainian electorate.

### **Other Program Highlights**

***Russia and Tennessee:*** Senator Lamar Alexander requested that Open World host health care leaders from Kirov, Russia in three locations in Tennessee. This nascent Tennessee-Kirov relationship was spearheaded by former U.S Senate Majority Leader William H. Frist, MD, an original member of Open World's Board of Trustees. Before travelling to Knoxville and Memphis (half to each), the 25 doctors, including the Minister of Health of Kirov Oblast, took part in a panel discussion on health care in the U.S. at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and toured the National Institutes of Health. The Memphis group had an intensive program at several research hospitals and concluded the program with presentations to their counterparts. The Knoxville group visited a university medical center and nursing schools. In Nashville, the two groups reunited in Nashville for an examination of the Vanderbilt Medical Center

led by Dr. Frist, and had exchanges with Congressman Jim Cooper, the Mayor of Nashville and the Tennessee Commissioner of Health. In the wrap up session, Dr. Frist led a discussion and had them list three areas for improvement in U.S. and Russian health delivery.

***Kyrgyzstan and Montana:*** In March, Bozeman, Montana hosted a mayor and several local lawmakers from Kyrgyzstan for an accountable governance exchange. The delegates discussed mayoral duties, the role of the city commission, and citizen engagement with Mayor Jeff Krauss; reviewed infrastructure development with a city planning-department official; and met with an aide to the city manager. The delegates also learned about attracting business to rural areas at the Chamber of Commerce, explored how Montana State University's Local Government Center assists local governments in the state, and took part in the biennial Montana Mayors Forum in Helena.

***Ukraine and Virginia:*** On March 4, 2011, the Arlington (Virginia) Sister City Association held an official signing ceremony with its newest sister city, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. This partnership was formalized as a result of Open World, through which several delegations from Ivano-Frankivsk were hosted in Arlington, allowing the two cities to further develop strong ties in governance, social programs, and other areas. Yulia Melnyk, a Washington, D.C.–based correspondent for the Kyiv Post, has praised the partnership between the two cities for including an economic component intended to boost cooperation between Ukrainian and U.S. businesses.

***Georgia and Georgia:*** In Atlanta, private and government lawyers from the Republic of Georgia observed jury selection and part of a criminal trial in federal court (Georgia is just beginning to use jury trials); received an in-depth review of criminal-trial, appellate, and post-conviction proceedings from a principal of the Maloy Jenkins & Parker law firm; and attended a class at Emory University School of Law. A tour and Q&A session at the federal penitentiary was also timely, as prisons in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi are implementing new regulations and practices. Rep. Phil Gingery met with the delegates in Marietta.

***Armenia and Iowa:*** During her visit to Iowa as part of the first Open World delegation from Armenia, a newspaper reporter who covers political and government issues, was eager to see the impact of American media on social issues. Having seen how Americans respect their laws and the judicial system, the delegate explained this to her fellow Armenians in the article "The U.S. Constitution is about Freedom of the Individual." In another article "Where the Law Ends, Tyranny Starts," she describes how ordinary citizens have access to Iowa leaders and are able to follow transparent decision-making processes. In subsequent articles, the reporter published an interview with a Des Moines Register reporter and other articles on Human Trafficking, Human Rights, and Domestic Violence. Ten days in the United States gave our delegate a chance to create an unbiased glimpse of America and Americans for a broad audience in Armenia.

***Kazakhstan and Wisconsin:*** In October 2011, a delegation of local government officials from rural towns and villages of Kazakhstan spent a week in Mauston,

Wisconsin to observe how municipalities are governed in rural America. City of Mauston officials described the role of elected officials and the authority and accountability of a professional city administrator and city departments. In addition, the delegates learned how public private partnerships can enhance community development as well as the role of businesses and citizens in economic development in rural Wisconsin. During the daylong program at the state capitol in Madison, delegates met with lobbyists who described strategies for citizens to inform and influence public policy by representing interests of groups with shared policy concerns.

In November, five Open World delegations from the Russian republic of Buryatia traveled to the United States for programs that were partially funded by the Russian ERA Foundation, whose founder, Senator Vitaly Malkin, represents Buryatia in the Russian parliament. Individual delegations visited **Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, and Ohio**. Further financial support for the delegation to Omaha, NE was provided by the Suzanne and Walter Scott Foundation. University agricultural experts visited soil-testing facilities, discussed international operations and marketing at an agriculture company, examined no-till farming at the University of Nebraska, and discussed federal agricultural programs with an aide to Senator Ben Nelson.

### **Budget Request**

In this lean fiscal environment, we are committed to keeping costs down while maintaining program quality. When constructing our budget, however, we must consider the fact that in reducing the number of participants hosted, there comes a tipping point in terms of efficiency. Certain base costs remain whether bringing 500 participants or 2,000. Using economy of scale, it is our experience that bringing **1,200** participants a year is that tipping point. Below that number, the program becomes less cost effective and the per person cost rises. To that end, our budget request of \$10 million is based on bringing 1,200 participants in 2013.

Open World spends its appropriation in two categories: Direct Program Costs and Administration Costs. Direct Program Costs includes: grants to host delegations in the United States; a logistical coordinator; and the direct program portion of salary and benefits of D.C. and Moscow staff. This is the minimum staff level required to manage 1,200 participants in a program year.

The Center's fiscal year 2013 budget request breaks down as follows:

<b>A. Direct Program</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$ 9,689,372</b>
1.	Logistical Contract	5,720,000
2.	Grants/Other Hosting Costs	3,283,450
3.	Salary/Benefits	685,922
<b>B. Administration</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$ 773,501</b>
1.	Salary/Benefits	408,255
2.	Services of Other Agencies	182,000

3.	Professional Services	146,640
4.	Miscellaneous Office	36,606

**TOTAL BUDGET:** **\$10,462,873<sup>1</sup>**

**Summary**

Open World has served the Congress well, earning strong bipartisan and bicameral support. This modest budget request, representing a flat budget, will enable the Open World Leadership Center to continue to make major contributions to an understanding of democracy, civil society, and free enterprise in a region of vital importance to the Congress and the nation. On behalf of the U.S. Congress, this powerful global network will continue to make a significant and positive mark on events in this strategically important region. This Subcommittee's interest and support have been essential ingredients in Open World's success.



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<sup>1</sup> The amount over \$10 million shown here will be covered by donations and other offsets.