Congress Rejects Obama Move to Restore Funding for Anti-Israel U.N. Group

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<http://freebeacon.com/issues/congress-rejects-obama-move-to-restore-funding-for-anti-israel-u-n-group/>

Congress has rejected a request by the Obama administration to restore U.S. funding for a United Nations organization long criticized for its anti-Israel bias, according to sources on Capitol Hill.

The Washington Free Beacon [disclosed earlier this week](http://freebeacon.com/issues/obama-administration-moves-to-restore-funding-for-anti-israel-u-n-organization/) that the Obama administration was pressuring lawmakers on Capitol Hill to restore around $80 million in annually funding to the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, otherwise known as UNESCO.

Taxpayer funding to the organization was [slashed](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/08/us-unesco-voting-funds-palestine-decision) in 2011 after UNESCO accepted Palestine as a member state, a move that violated U.S. law barring the funding of any U.N. group that skirts the peace process by prematurely admitting Palestine as a full member nation.

However, the State Department petitioned Democratic lawmakers on the Senate’s appropriations committee to restore UNESCO’s funding and grant the administration authority to provide an additional $160 million to help erase accrued debts.

The administration argued that the lack of funding was harming the United States’ credibility at UNESCO and contributing to a rise in anti-Israel actions, such as a recent move to label Jerusalem’s Western Wall as a Muslim holy site.

The State Department requested that a waiver be added to the Senate’s version of a sprawling yearly spending bill set to be approved by Congress before year’s end. However, that request was killed off by lawmakers and did not make its way into the final text of the bill.

The administration’s effort to restore UNESCO funding, despite a law banning it, raised concerns among Republican leaders and prompted several to take a stand against it.

Sen. Mark Kirk (R., Ill.), who [spearheaded efforts to block the funding waiver](http://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/20151211-Kirk-Rubio-Letter-to-Leader-McConnell-Speaker-Ryan-on-UNESCO-PLO-FY16-Omnibus-Corr.pdf), told the Free Beacon that Republican leadership in the Senate took a bold stand by rejecting the administration’s request.

“I thank congressional Republican leadership for working with Senator [Marco] Rubio and me to uphold a 25-year-old law and stop the Administration from air-dropping back-door funding to UNESCO, the U.N. organization whose anti-Israel member states have granted membership to the non-state actor of ‘Palestine’ and provocatively tried to designated the Western Wall in Jerusalem as a Muslim holy site,” Kirk told the Free Beacon in a statement.