

**Statement of James H. Billington  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees  
Center for Russian Leadership Development  
Before the  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
April 10, 2003**

Chairman Campbell, Senator Durbin and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Open World Russian Leadership Program began as a pilot exchange program in the Library of Congress in 1999 (PL 106-31). The Open World Program is now conducted by an independent legislative branch entity, the Center for Russian Leadership Development – soon to be re-named the Open World Leadership Center. June 2003 marks the beginning of the fifth year of the program, which already has 6265 alumni (as of April 1, 2003) from all 89 political units of the Russian Federation.

Funding for Open World in FY2003 was finalized only on February 20, 2003, in PL 108-7, which also authorized a number of significant changes. The program's scope was expanded to include the 11 remaining Freedom Support Act countries, as well as the three Baltic states. The Center's name will change on May 15<sup>th</sup> to the Open World Leadership Center to reflect this expanded mission. The scope of the Russian program has also been expanded to include cultural, as well as political, leaders. The Center's FY2004 request of \$14.8 M will allow the program to continue to operate in Russia, to maintain its efficient operations and low *per capita* outlay, and to develop pilot expansion programs in two to three countries of the former Soviet Union and the Baltics if Congress so authorizes after Open World pilots are undertaken in FY2003.

The Center's proposed expansion pilots must be approved by this subcommittee before being implemented. Let me outline for the members of the subcommittee the approach we are taking toward this planning and what we expect shortly to recommend to the Center's board and ultimately to you. The program expansion requires a number of steps before and after the subcommittee's approval:

- strategic assessment of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives for each country, as well as an assessment of past and planned U.S. government aid;
- assessment of success factors, including the availability of appropriate nominating and host organizations, and logistical and language support;
- consultation with the Department of State and an assessment of the availability of assistance from the U.S. Embassy for each new pilot country;
- publication of grant hosting guidelines and review of submitted proposals;
- grant awards and program implementation, including travel logistics and visas;
- development of appropriate evaluation tools.

Once approval has been granted to proceed with expansion pilots, implementation will take a minimum of 16 weeks. Tightened visa regulations in almost all U.S. embassies necessitate a lead time of 12 weeks, which takes into account the possible need for in-person interviews for a substantial number of delegates. We hope to have all travel for this year's exchanges completed by October 2003, although this target could change depending on when the pilots are approved. In our Russia program, we have already brought 357 participants this year through April 9, 2003.

Our implementation schedule will not allow the results of the pilots to be considered by this subcommittee before action is expected to be completed on the FY2004 budget. Because the Center's appropriation is made to its Treasury Department trust fund, funding is not restricted to fiscal year obligations. The Center proposes, therefore, to maintain a reserve of \$2M to be available to fund additional countries. A total of 1,600 participants would be brought from the Russian Federation since the beginning of 2003; a total of 160 participants would be brought from expansion states with an evaluation mechanism sufficient to support a decision with regard to program continuation or further expansion. The Open World Program might serve as a useful model for programs to accompany significant U.S. aid to nations in support of democratic reforms and institutions. A draft timetable and assessment chart are included as Attachments A and B, respectively.

We are requesting \$14.8 million for FY2004, an increase of 14.8 percent over the FY2003 funding level in order to be able to expand the FY2003 pilot programs in as many as three new countries into more full-fledged programs. The decision on how many and which programs will be so developed will be based on our assessment of the successes of the pilots, and the need to maintain the hosting of Russian civic leaders at a level comparable to previous years. The FY2004 request is also premised on the continued and modest growth of the Russian Cultural Leaders program, another element of expansion mandated in the appropriations for FY2003.

## **2002 Program Overview and Highlights**

In 2002 Open World welcomed its largest number of participants since the program's inception – 2,531 – more than ten times the number of participants in 2001, when the Center was being created as an independent entity, and a 58 percent increase over 2000. A fact sheet for the Open World Program is included as Attachment C, but let me highlight elements of the 2002 program.

- The program's reach in both the Russian Federation and the U.S. is broad and deep.
- We continue to find young leaders with increasingly significant political experience behind them: 50 percent are working in local, regional, and federal government entities; 21 percent, in education and the media (an area exploding in both number and diversity of outlets in Russia); 17 percent, in Russia's still nascent NGO sector.

- Home hosting in 2002 has been sustained for 85 percent of participants and the availability of new American host sites continues to expand each year.

A new theme-focused recruitment effort attracted a higher-caliber candidate and allowed host organizations and local host communities to develop programs with greater professional benefit for participants. This focus increased satisfaction with programs and built professional as well as personal ties across the two countries – creating in many cases ongoing links that expand the benefit of the 10-day intensive training program.

Eight themes were developed in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and with U.S. organizations and foundations working in Russia: rule of law, economic development, women as leaders, health, education reform, environment, federalism, and youth issues (including drug, alcohol, and HIV/AIDS intervention programs). Rule of law (17 percent) and women as leaders (14 percent) were among the largest theme-groupings.

- 2002 Participants represented 47 ethnic groups and 86 of 89 regions (total program representation now reaches 55 ethnic groups and 89 of 89 regions).
- Average age of delegates in 2002 was 38.
- The Center hosted 53 arriving groups (on unique travel dates) comprised of 464 delegations.
- Most groups arriving in Washington, D.C., received a political and cultural orientation at the Library of Congress.
- At the suggestion of our Board members and in recognition of the importance of including more of the Muslim population of Russia in Open World, we have made a significant effort to recruit participants from such traditionally Muslim regions as Adigei, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Karachaevo-Cherkesskaia, and Tatarstan, and have selectively chosen delegates from Chechnia and Ingushetia. The proportion of Open World delegates who are Muslim reflects the percentage of Muslims in the Russian population, and Open World is prepared to increase its recruitment of this population if Members of Congress and our Board request such action.
- Women comprised 54 percent of the delegates, reflecting the addition of the “women as leaders” theme in 2002.
- Participants in 2002 were hosted in 372 communities in 48 states (including Alaska and Hawaii); overall Open World hosting has reached all 50 states.
- Colorado hosted 113 participants; Illinois, 168; Utah, 91; Alaska, 59; South Dakota, 24.
- Eighteen host organizations received grants in 2002 (eight organizations were first-time hosts, including the Alaska State Legislature. This is the first elected body to serve as a collective host. We hope to expand the model to other state legislatures as the significance of Russia’s regional legislatures grows).
- Grant applications to host in 2003 (with only civic guidelines posted) already total 23, with hosting capacity of over 4,200 participants – and with 10 organizations requesting to host for the first time.

## History

The Open World Russian Leadership Program was initiated as a result of a discussion among key Members of Congress in April 1999 and launched six weeks later with press announcements in Washington and Moscow. The original sponsor of the legislation that created Open World (PL 106-31) was Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), who now serves as Honorary Chair of the Center's Board of Trustees. The program continued as a pilot at the Library of Congress until December 2000, when Congress created the independent Center for Russian Leadership Development (PL 106-554) and authorized the Library of Congress to continue housing the center and providing administrative support for its operations.

From its inception, Open World has enjoyed strong support from Members of Congress. Five members serve on its Board of Trustees (Attachment D). This year 34 Members of Congress and five justices of the Supreme Court welcomed Open World delegations, joined by 13 governors; 33 mayors of major cities; state legislators; and community and civic leaders in 48 states. At a time when the U.S. has an enhanced understanding of the value of public diplomacy, Open World stands as the largest "people-to-people" exchange since the establishment of the Fulbright-Hays Program and the Peace Corps.

The Open World Program was created in a few short weeks at a time when U.S.-Russian relations were at a particularly difficult point during the late spring of 1999. In the intervening years, relations between Russia and the United States improved, particularly after the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Unfortunately, relations between Russia and the U.S. in April 2003 are again strained, and anti-American sentiment is again evident in Russia. The percentage of Russians holding unfavorable opinions of the U.S. has risen to a level roughly equivalent to opinion tracked during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 (Attachment E). At that time, Congress expressed its judgment on the importance of this country's relations with Russia by appropriating funds for a new Russian Leadership Program – which the Library of Congress organized. We brought 1975 young emerging political leaders from Russia to the U.S. for the first time for brief stays to observe America's democracy and market economy firsthand. The participants were active leaders, not scholars; they stayed in homes, not hotels; they saw the U.S. with their own eyes and made their own judgments; they immersed themselves in a single community.

Open World participants are the leaders of a struggling but emerging democracy in all 89 regions of Russia – not just in Moscow with its veneer of fast food restaurants and American television and films. Open World participants stay in, and establish often continuing links with communities all over America – not just with New York and Washington. Thanks to Open World, there are now hundreds of cities and towns whose mayors, regional and city legislators, judges, prosecutors, educators, entrepreneurs, women leaders, and NGO leaders have been welcomed into American communities and homes. While here, these Russian leaders have observed and discussed jury trials, health

care delivery, AIDS prevention, high school drug intervention programs, the nature of federalism in emerging democracies, and the financing and building of small and medium-sized businesses.

### **Then and Now**

The Open World Program was initiated in 1999 and is even more important today – because cementing Russia’s engagement with the West is one of the most critical continuing challenges for American foreign policy. Russia has a geopolitical position bordering on many of the most potentially threatening regions in the world; and it has one of the world’s largest stores of weapons of mass destruction and of untapped natural resources. It is aggressively trying to replace a long authoritarian tradition with a fragile democracy; and surprisingly few of its leaders have had any experience of how an open society operates.

The State Department – with whom we consult and work closely (the Open World Program is housed in the U. S. Embassy in Moscow) has testified this year that Russia is now well on its way in its transition to democratic governance and a market economy. Because Freedom Support Act assistance to Russia is being phased out over the next several years, in part to devote funding to Central Asia, the State Department is looking to other assistance and exchange programs, such as Open World, to continue to support fundamental change in Russia. It is clearly an important priority for the U.S. to engage in public diplomacy and provide increased aid to the states of Central Asia, which have understandably received greater attention since September 11, 2001. But the work of Russia’s emerging and still struggling generation of future leaders is not over – it has scarcely begun. Opportunities to bring the next generation of Russian leaders – committed to democracy and real progress – remain strong.

U.S. visits offered by the Open World Program remain the single most important and cost-effective means of continuing a positive and productive Russian engagement with the U.S. whatever the fluctuations in our diplomatic relations. The program’s home in the Legislative Branch secures not only the involvement of Members of Congress but a direct connection to the communities and states members represent – communities that host Russian Open World leaders in unprecedented numbers in American homes and that directly reflect American values and ideals.

A closer look at three program areas will help members of the subcommittee better appreciate its reach and impact in Russia:

### **Rule of Law**

Since launching the Open World specialized rule of law program in 2001, the Center for Russian Leadership Development has quickly become one of the premier organizations working to support Russian jurists as they implement judicial reforms. In 2002, 213 Russian judges participated in Open World’s specialized program in which five Supreme Court justices and two Supreme Commercial Court justices participated. Each delegation

was hosted for a week in the court of a prominent U.S. federal or state judge, who planned and participated in the delegate's intensive agenda. In 2002, 42 U.S. judges hosted their Russian counterparts, and dozens more—including U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Associate Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony M. Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen G. Breyer—played an active role in the Russian jurists' professional programs.

Activities included observing court proceedings; shadowing American judges; visiting corrections facilities, police departments, and law schools; and participating in roundtables with judges and other legal professionals. Topics covered included judicial ethics and independence, court administration and security, case management and trial procedures. Several delegations also used their Open World visits to establish or strengthen sister-court relationships with their host courts. Participants were prepared for their community visits by a two-day orientation program in Washington, D.C., conducted by U.S. judges and judicial staff with the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and the Federal Judicial Center, the federal courts' research and education arm.

U.S. federal host judges were recruited by, and in many cases members of, the International Judicial Relations Committee of the U.S. Judicial Conference, the federal courts' policy-making body. State host judges were members of the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium, a network of partnerships among the legal communities of seven Russian regions and seven U.S. states.

Open World worked closely with the Russian Federation Council of Judges (the policy-making body for the country's all-federal courts of general jurisdiction) and the Supreme Commercial Court of the Russian Federation in selecting candidates for the program.

A special focus of this Open World rule of law programming in 2002 was jury-trial procedure. The jury-trial system, which was banned throughout the Soviet era, was reinstated on a pilot basis in the early 1990s in nine Russian regions. The recent passage of President Putin's judicial reform package includes the nationwide expansion of jury trials for serious criminal cases. Judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys throughout Russia must now quickly become familiar with jury procedures. In response, Open World 2002 included programming and hands-on exposure to observe how American-style jury trials are conducted for three delegations made up of teams of prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, and judges.

Open World 2002 included a new focus on legal education. Twenty-four deans and faculty of Russian law schools participated in visits hosted by Cleveland State University College of Law, George Washington University Law School, Rutgers Law School, University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law, University of Maine School of Law, and Vermont Law School. Court administrators were also included in the Open World 2002 specialized rule of law programming, with one delegation participating in a court management program hosted by the National Center for State Courts in Arlington, Virginia, and in Portland, Oregon (where they attended the annual meeting of the

National Association of Court Managers), and several more high-level court administrators joined other delegations.

### **Women as Leaders**

The women as leaders theme was a major new focus for the 2002 Open World Program in recognition of the markedly increased role of women in the new generation of emerging Russian leaders. Aiming to promote the professional advancement of women in many fields, the women as leaders program gave 361 Russian women new leadership skills, resources, and training. The 2002 program targeted specific groups of women, including politicians; entrepreneurs; journalists; and activists addressing human trafficking and domestic violence. Many women were recommended by first-time Open World nominating organizations recruited to nominate for this new theme, such as the League of Women Voters, the Alliance of American and Russian Women, the Association of Women Journalists, and Russia's Ministry of Labor and Social Development.

During their U.S. visits, participants job shadowed their American counterparts, attended leadership training seminars, met with prominent researchers and specialists in their given fields, and visited women's organizations and other NGOs to learn new strategies for fundraising, membership, volunteer recruitment, and advocacy. For example, Vital Voices Global Partnership, which works to expand women's roles in politics, civil society, and business, conducted an effective training program for a group of thirteen Russian women working against the serious problem of human trafficking as researchers, counselors, activists, and NGO and government leaders. While in the U.S., the Russian women not only learned about practical strategies to fight trafficking, they also built new partnerships with their American counterparts involved in this issue, as well as among themselves. The importance of creating a support network with other anti-trafficking advocates in Russia was summed up by one participant from a small city in Russia's Far East, who said, "I found out we are not alone. I'm from so far away, but there are so many of us."

### **Election 2002**

The fall 2002 election cycle enabled the Open World Program to show delegates American democracy in action as part of the program's federalism and women as leaders themes. Delegations visited polling stations; met with candidates, campaign officials, and journalists; received demonstrations on voting technology; and observed candidates campaigning. To prepare these delegations, a special presentation on American elections and the media was given at the D.C. orientation session.

One such delegation included a department head from the Russian Federation Presidential Press Service and prominent women journalists. This delegation met with the White House Communications Director, attended a White House briefing, visited the *Baltimore Sun*, met with Maryland candidates and political campaign officials and attended election night receptions. The Alaska State Legislature hosted two delegations

of regional legislators and elections officials from the Russian Far East for elections-related activities that included following candidates as they campaigned door-to-door and analyzing the election results with state legislators.

### **Links to Open World Alumni**

Open World seeks to extend the value and significance of the brief U.S. visit for its 6,265 alumni with continuing links to American hosts and opportunities to meet and work collaboratively with other Open World alumni and alumni of other U.S. government-funded exchange programs. Open World made a commitment from its inception to track all program participants; ours is the single largest and most current database of such alumni in Russia. Because of the number of Open World alumni, their distribution throughout all regions, and our ability to locate them quickly through the database, U.S. government officials at the embassy, consulates, Regional Initiative offices, U.S. Foreign Commercial Service offices and other federal agencies meet and work regularly with them. Ambassador Vershbow recently met with our alumni in Perm and at American Corner openings in Arkhangelsk, Kaliningrad, Saratov, and Saint Petersburg.

Open World's alumni bulletins and English-Russian website provide the means for communication and enhanced professional opportunities. Alumni are eager to provide Open World with topical articles and to report on their projects. Privately-funded efforts in 2003 will expand opportunities for training, professional development, and communication. Particular efforts will be made to link Open World alumni with Muskie and FLEX alumni in order to increase and multiply the strong U.S.-Russian political and cultural ties these programs each embody.

Alumni are also contributing to local and regional newspapers, sharing their experiences and bringing a new perspective on America to local readers. In several cities alumni have organized thematic conferences upon their return to Russia. One such example was a conference on youth policy in America held in Barnaul on International Students' Day. Open World alumni explained how local government, the business community, and the nonprofit sector in the U.S. all work together to educate young people. Conference attendees received lists of American organizations eager to cooperate with them on youth issues. One of the youth leaders in Barnaul, Aleksey Ustiugov, said that "on Open World I was able to study all aspects of the U.S. educational system and establish relations with youth organizations. The program not only fosters mutual understanding, but also strengthens trust and friendship between our nations."

### **Achievements and Goals**

- Open World has engaged and connected American and Russian leaders and citizens at all levels of our political system in unprecedented numbers.
- Open World has engaged Americans in more than 900 communities in all 50 states in public diplomacy. The United States has no finer advocates than our own citizens and community leaders who are actively involved in the public, private, and voluntary sectors.



- Opportunities to host Open World participants have expanded each year in communities all over America. Interest in building mutual understanding has increased. Many communities have hosted every year since the program began and maintain strong ties to communities and colleagues in Russia.
- The effectiveness of the Open World Program has been recognized by the Congress, which has now authorized new nation pilots beyond Russia.
- Open World provides a new, cost-effective model for both encouraging democratic development abroad and encouraging citizen engagement in public diplomacy at home. This model can probably be expanded to many other nations.

Open World's visitors and hosts express best the program's focus and results:

**U.S. Ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow**

I would just like to thank Open World for giving Russians the chance to take part in these exchanges, which in turn help them transform the social and economic life of their regions, and this vast country as a whole. Your program touches the lives of individuals, but their good works in turn will affect and inspire an entire generation of Russians.

**Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor**

Nothing holds more promise for achieving the long-term security and prosperity of the world community than the rule of law. Nations that adhere to the rule of law share certain common understandings that reach across cultural and political divides. The Open World Russian Leadership Program plays a vital role in this dynamic process.

**Judge Paul A. Magnuson, District of Minnesota**

Through this demanding program, Russian judges and legal personnel immerse themselves in the U.S. system of justice by partnering with a leading Federal or State judge and living as part of an American community. Besides the intensive study and knowledge gained relating to case management, scheduling, court administration, jury selection, plea agreements, pretrial detention procedures, the adversarial process, etc.,... there are also profound lessons learned about American society, the esteemed position of Judges, and the principles of the rule of law. It is clear to me, that the judges and legal professionals participating in Open World are taking these lessons home with them and sharing them with their colleagues, multiplying many times the effectiveness of the Open World rule of law exchange program.

**Chairman of the Council of Judges of the Russian Federation and Supreme Court Justice Yuriy I. Sidorenko**

During the course of the visits, the Russian judges were successful in forming solid, fundamental, long-lasting, and fully productive relationships between the Russian and American judiciaries. The programs allowed the Russian judges to get acquainted with the system of justice in the U.S. and, because of this, they were able to further progressive legal reform in Russia. Last year's program provided us with a special opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the jury trial system in the U.S., which, as is well known, is once again being introduced in Russia.

**Open World "Women as Leaders" Participant  
Irina Zamula, City of Ulan Ude, Buryat Republic, Aide to Russian State Duma Deputy**

The U.S. Library of Congress Open World program is unique. The program makes it possible to strengthen relations between our two countries at the level of inter-personal relations, and through contacts between ordinary citizens, who are able to see, hear and understand one another. The many meetings...gave us a lot. But the most important thing – they provided us the opportunity to change our stereotypical views toward American society.