

The newsletter of the campaign advancing the International Food Security Treaty (IFST), the proposed global covenant to place the **human right to be free from hunger** under the protection of enforceable international law. Its name echoes the first moon landing, in the belief that ending hunger is equally achievable.

EVOLUTION IN ACTION: PROGRESS IN CONGRESS

by John Teton
Director, IFST Campaign

I am pleased to report that the effort to develop support for the IFST within the U.S. Congress has made significant advances.

When last reported upon in *Giant Leap* (Vol.1, Issue 1), discussion of the Treaty on Capitol Hill had been recently marked by a briefing for Congressional staffers and others in Washington interested in the hunger problem. That briefing was sponsored by two non-governmental agencies, one of which was an anti-hunger fellowship program receiving Congressional support. That meeting led to a core working group proposal to request a Treaty briefing before a Caucus of the Congress itself. IFST Campaign volunteers subsequently succeeded in getting the office of Rep. Tom Lantos, Co-Chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, to set up two briefings for Members of Congress affiliated with the Caucus: in May 2003, chaired by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), and in March 2004, chaired by Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA).

At each briefing, I presented a case for the Treaty (currently posted on the Caucus website, an easy jump from the News and Events link on the IFST website at www.treaty.org) and took advantage of the opportunity to lobby for the Treaty in both the House and Senate.

In the March lobbying, the Treaty enjoyed the tremendously effective assistance of volunteer Peter Armour, a San Franciscan serving as the IFSTC's Northern California Coordinator. With a quick orientation, Peter joined me in introducing the Treaty to dozens of House and Senate staffers, many of whom weren't able to attend the Caucus



IFSTC Director John Teton at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, March, 2004 (at desk, right). Also pictured on panel, from left: Roy Stacey, FEWSNET; Judith Lewis, World Food Programme (partly hidden); Lauren Landis, USAID; and Suresh Babu, International Food Policy Research Institute.

Briefing and would have had no other way to get an in-person impression of the Campaign and the Treaty's potential. Peter's story of how he, as a complete novice, leapt into this historic process of galvanizing visionaries in the Congress, is featured in a fascinating and inspiring article he contributed to this issue of *Giant Leap* (see page 3).

Our lobbying paid off in April by leading to a Campaign-hosted teleconference on strategy for advancing the Treaty within the Congress. Joining Peter and me on the teleconference were staff representing Senators Barbara Boxer, Hillary Clinton, Dianne Feinstein, Richard Lugar, and Congressman Patrick Kennedy, along with Dr. Margaret Zeigler of the Congressional Hunger Center. Others who had been unable to join have been in touch with the Campaign since then. **[CONGRESS, cont'd on p.4]**

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A CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

Robert Fox Explains Why He Joined the IFST Campaign

interviewed by Lynn Kienzel



IFSTC Volunteer Robert Fox

► Bob, how did you first hear about the International Food Security Treaty Campaign?

I first heard about IFST from an article in the local newspaper describing the IFST and saying that John Teton would be giving a lecture on the IFST at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

► What made you decide to get involved?

IFST's mission, of helping to end hunger on a worldwide scale, is something that I have been interested in for a long time.

► There are many areas where a volunteer can get started in the IFSTC. What kinds of projects did you consider, and which of these opportunities did you find the most compelling?

When I joined IFST I was looking for something that I could do where I could put my knowledge and expertise to work for the organization. Since I have an extensive business background, I was primarily interested in projects involved in the business/administrative area.

► What projects did you first get involved in for the IFSTC?

Since I've been involved with the IFST I have been primarily involved in getting the organization incorporated as a nonprofit corporation and getting our tax exempt status approved by the IRS and the State Franchise Tax Board.

► What has been the most interesting project you have worked on, and what has been the most challenging project you have worked on?

Both the most interesting *and* most challenging project I've worked on has been getting the IFST incorporated as a nonprofit. I've never set up a nonprofit organization before and I learned a great deal in the process.

► Do you find these projects rewarding in terms of your own experience as you work on them?

In addition to the reward of being able to learn new things and add to my life experience, it's very satisfying to feel that something that I'm doing that may somehow make a difference in the world. I really feel lucky to be a part of the IFST.

► When you're not working on projects for the IFSTC, what kind of work do you do?

I'm basically an entrepreneur. I'm very lucky that I get to work on a variety of projects in the business field. I'm currently corporate secretary for my family's business, which is real estate and wholesale security equipment, and I have just started my own real estate investment company.

► Considering all the work you have to do to accomplish your own private endeavors, how do you find time to contribute to the IFSTC?

IFST really doesn't take up that much of my time. I just add the IFST's needs into my schedule and I work on them when I can. It's really not a burden. It's more like an escape from all the other things I have to do.

► What advice would you give to people who might think it a little overwhelming to get involved?

It's really not overwhelming at all. You don't have to take on the entire mission of the IFST. You just do what you can. I feel like what I'm contributing to the effort is so little, but I see that every little bit helps. Every effort, whether it's checking the post office box, making a phone call, writing a letter, filling out a form, or doing whatever else it is that you can do to help, does make a difference; and, combined with the efforts of others, can really make a *big* difference. ◀◀

REFLECTIONS OF A FIRST-TIME LOBBYIST

First Person Singular

by Peter Armour

Greetings from San Francisco, CA. I write this days after returning from Washington, D.C. where I accompanied John Teton, IFST director, on a networking trip in support of a major IFST presentation at a Congressional Human Rights Caucus briefing on March 3, 2004. The briefing, chaired by Rep. Lois Capps, (D-CA) was a watershed event in the Treaty's progress. The Treaty platform occupied a major part in the briefing, which was initially organized with the help of Rep. Tom Lantos's office (D-CA), and served as our way of spreading the message firsthand to interested members of the Senate and House.

My role in the process was as a lobbyist and spokesman. To be honest, I was initially noncommittal about going to Washington. There were lots of standard reasons I could find for not going — fatigue, the workload in my office, the need to take a *real* vacation. As a husband, and a father to two young kids, and a renter struggling to make ends meet in beautiful but expensive San Francisco, I have little time for extra-domestic activities. But at a certain point I realized that, as the saying goes, I would never *find* the time for the Treaty; I would have to *make* the time. I am also the sort of person who likes to invest his time in things that give maximum and, where possible, immediate results. What clinched the trip for me was realizing that this was a chance to contribute energy at a critical juncture in the history of the Treaty, energy that could result in a major advance. I cleared four days of vacation time with my boss and booked my airline ticket.

Within hours after our arrival in D.C., John and I hit the ground running, starting with a barrage of morning phone calls to a targeted list of House and Senate offices, reminding them about the upcoming briefing. Then, after lunch, we trooped off to the Hill, briefcases in hand. Our task was to gain additional support for the Treaty from all interested parties, Republican or Democrat, who showed interest. One of the beauties of the Treaty concept is that it is hard to argue with wanting to end world hunger, so I had no problem in approaching people of either stripe. This is much bigger than a Republican vs. Democrat issue.

As it turned out, John concentrated on the Senate office buildings on the north side of the Capitol, and I focused on

the House offices, located in three adjoining buildings, Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn. It was intense, demanding work combining both salesmanship and a bit of evangelism. Winning support meant getting beyond the steadfast aides waiting behind every office door, and somehow speaking with a Legislative Assistant (L.A.) or a staffer specializing in international relations, giving a short pitch for the Treaty and hopefully gaining an ally, or at least sowing a seed of interest, all of this done in a matter of ten to fifteen minutes. Sometimes the scenario played out as I hoped. But often the L.A. or the person I needed to talk with wasn't there, or was in a meeting, or was simply "unavailable."

Everything about Capitol Hill is super-sized and imposing, the height and length of the buildings, even the distances *between* the buildings. It's easy to see why an outsider might feel small and insignificant in D.C. To counteract this feeling, I had to constantly remind myself of a couple of points. First, I kept in mind that everyone and everything I saw — the Congresspeople (glimpsed only in passing, if at all), the legions of staff members, *everything* down to the office furniture, the computers, the fax machines, the letterhead, the business cards — everything is paid for by taxpayer dollars, our dollars. Secondly, and more importantly, since politicians typically must sift through stacks of issues, and deal with the constant pitches of corporate lobbyists and special interest groups, it was up to me to bring the Treaty to their attention, and help them *see* it amidst the bureaucratic blur of business as usual. Again, I would remind myself, who could say no to the idea of ending world hunger?

My standard spiel was pretty compact. I came up with the acronym "MRLE" for the Treaty's four principles, the key obligations signatory nations must agree to fulfill:

- 1) guarantee access to **Minimum** nutritional standards,
- 2) contribute to a food **Reserve** and resource center,



IFSTC Volunteer Peter Armour

[FIRST-TIME LOBBYIST, cont'd on p.4]

3) establish **L**aw against denying access to food, *and*

4) **E**nforce the Treaty, as needed.

I elaborated from there, emphasizing the boost in international prestige the U.S. might win by being the first sponsor of the Treaty. Lastly, I pointed out that the Treaty could greatly help to eradicate the breeding grounds for world discontent, anger, and ultimately, terrorism. The object was to be informative, energetic, and especially succinct, since on the Hill, everyone's eyes are always on the ticking clock.

The caucus briefing was, as its name implies, brief. John delivered a powerful address to Representative Capps and a room filled with interested political aides and staffers. A copy of this is on our website at www.treaty.org. After the briefing, John and I spoke with the other panelists and members of the audience, encouraging them to participate in a planned teleconference of House and Senate staff.

When the event was finally over, it was time for John and me to compare notes about prospective allies. Then, on the final day, we returned again to the Hill for yet more lobbying, visiting offices that we hadn't hit earlier, and doing follow-ups to offices that had indicated an earlier interest.

My trip to Washington was a wonderful, empowering experience. It greatly changed my views about politics as well as my views about my abilities. I would gladly return and do it all again. As of this writing, there is still much to be done. The teleconference with supporters from the House and Senate is still in the offing. [ED. NOTE: See John Teton's column *Evolution in Action* elsewhere in this issue for a report on the teleconference.] It is yet another critical step in the steady growth of the Treaty. To anyone reading this article, I encourage you to jump into the Treaty water, whether it's to make phone calls, make a financial contribution, help to fundraise, secure in-kind donations, enlist another volunteer, or write a letter. You'll be surprised at what you can do. The point is everyone can do something. The Treaty needs people power to work. ◀

Peter Armour works in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco, and volunteers as the Northern California Coordinator of the IFST Campaign.

[CONGRESS, cont'd from p.1]

There was a fruitful discussion of ways to build consensus for the Treaty within the Congress itself and other agencies addressing hunger, and it was clear that an excellent foundation of interest and support for the Treaty was beginning to emerge.

Also taking part in the April teleconference was IFST Campaign Treasurer Bob Fox, whose interview with *Giant Leap* co-editor Lynn Kienzel is also featured in this issue. Over the past couple of years, Bob's successful navigation of the bureaucratic seas necessary to establish the IFST Association (the Campaign's umbrella organization) as a state-certified non-profit corporation has been inspiring to all who've observed it. Along with Peter Armour's article, this interview demonstrates how much difference a single citizen with no directly related experience can make in fueling the movement to end world hunger sheerly by dint of his or her own energetic idealism.

IFST Campaign experience proves that invaluable contributions to this embryonic campaign can be made with much less investment of time even than that allowed by the busy schedules of these volunteers. Anyone reading these words who might wish to consider exploring the infinite possibilities for participating in fueling this historic movement is invited to contact me at JT@treaty.org. I very much look forward to hearing from you. ◀

What's that calling?

To read the text of the International Food Security Treaty, follow Campaign news and events, or learn how you can help eradicate hunger by strengthening human rights law, visit the IFST Campaign at www.treaty.org

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