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## Marin Voice: US support for Global Fund fight against TB needed

*By Gail Dolson*

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Dr. Uvitra Naido, in his opinion piece in the May 19 New York Times, "Eliminate the TB Scrooge," made the correct assessment that tuberculosis is one of the world's most deadly infectious diseases, second only to AIDS.

There are an estimated 9 million new cases every year or about 24,000 every day.

Many people who contract TB have drug-resistant forms, making it difficult to treat and eradicate. An estimated 1.5 million people worldwide die each year from this ancient bacterium.

TB usually attacks the lungs, but can lodge in any part of the body and is easily spread through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs.

Even people flying who are contagious can spread TB in an airplane because some of the air in a plane is circulated through the air ducts and people who are in the early infectious stages of tuberculosis are generally unaware of their diagnosis.

Tuberculosis can be managed and in many cases contained.

The cost of treatment is about \$40 in low- and middle-income countries and \$50 in more affluent nations, but those costs can easily triple if the bacterium become resistant to first line drugs.

There have not been any new drugs introduced in the last 20 years and tremendous growth of highly drug-resistant strains of TB. And since 2004, there has been a 29 percent decrease in the death rate from TB in countries where the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria invests.

This organization is a 21st-century public-private partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and people affected by the disease.

The Global Fund does not itself administer programs, but rather provides grants to individuals, organizations and government agencies in affected countries that submit qualified grant proposals, thus developing local capacity and providing local control for these lifesaving programs.

Thus far, 125 countries are participating with the global fund in TB treatment and elimination projects.

The Global Fund operates with a high degree of transparency in all of its work, including applications for funding and oversight.

You can track every dollar on its website.

Additionally, it ensures a minimum of waste and corruption because programs must demonstrate effectiveness and stay within their projected budgets and stand up to rigorous audits or funding sources are not renewed for the project.

The United States is a leader in supporting the Global Fund, which encourages other nations to "step up to the plate."

The U.S. should continue its leadership role when the world comes together on Sept. 16 in Canada to ensure that the fund raises the \$13 billion needed for the next three years of programs

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria can make a huge difference for millions of people all over the globe, especially in poor and developing countries.

It also makes us safer at home by addressing diseases like TB at its source rather than letting it travel around the globe.

This is important to us because last year alone there were 2,137 new cases of TB in the United States. There were nine new cases in Marin and Sonoma counties and 31 in San Francisco, proving that everything global is also local and not to be ignored.

I want to thank Rep. Jared Huffman for his commitment to our well-being by becoming part of the TB elimination task force in Washington.

Now is the time for him to take a leading role in pushing for the president and Congress to expand our support for the Global Fund before the world meets in September in Canada.

*Gail Dolson of San Rafael is a nurse practitioner and a member of RESULTS, a citizen activist and advocacy group committed to the eradication of poverty in the U.S. and globally.*

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