

By Rob Christensen and John Frank

Democratic Rep. David Price criticized GOP presidential candidate Rick Perry's proposal to eliminate foreign aid and require countries to start "at zero" to justify any aid received in the future.

"We might dismiss this ridiculous assertion as a 'Hail Mary' from a candidate desperate to revive his flagging chances were it not for the fact that it drew heavy applause from the Republican voters in the audience and eager agreement from the rest of the Republican field - including the presumptive front-runner," Price said in a House floor speech Friday.

Price asked how "the party of internationalists such as Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan" could cut foreign aid to zero.

He said foreign aid, which was less than 1 percent of the federal budget, was a cost effective investment to strengthen key allies such as Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Afghanistan and Egypt.

Price is the co-chair of the House Democracy Partnership which works with parliaments in 14 development democracies including Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia and Haiti.

Perry, the Texas governor, said during the recent GOP debate in Spartanburg, that "It's time for us as a country to say no to foreign aid to countries that don't support the United States." Perry questioned foreign aid to Pakistan, but he backed support to allies such as Israel.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich agreed with Perry's proposal. But Rep. Michele Bachmann, who sits on the House Intelligence Committee, said that Pakistan was too important to cut off foreign aid. Former Sen. Rick Santorum also voiced reservations about the idea.