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## Backing microcredit

I learned something interesting today: Congressman Jerry McNerney signed onto a letter to new World Bank president Robert Zoellick. The letter originated in Congressmen Rush Holt's and John Carter's offices and urges Zoellick to steer the World Bank toward greater funding of microcredit programs.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus originated microcredit in which very small amounts of money are lent to the very poor so they can go into business for themselves and their families. These loans are repaid with interest and the money is then lent to others.

In well run microcredit programs, repayment rates are 95 percent to 99 percent. A study of three programs in Bangladesh found that three percent of their clients lift themselves out of poverty each year. An estimate of another group of microcredit programs reported that a \$1 million dollar investment in the programs will generate \$15 million in small loans and \$3 million in savings in five years.

I hope Representatives George Miller and Ellen Tauscher follow McNerney's lead and sign the Holt and Carter letter. Getting the World Bank to support more microcredit programs would help it achieve its stated goal of reducing poverty.

**Jim Driggers**  
Concord