



April 15, 2025

Ms. Sepideh Keyvanshad
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Human Capital and Talent Management

Ms Keyvanshad,

Thank you for the recent posting of all Agency related RIF messages to the internal website. This is a positive step.

Since January, AFSA has been inundated with questions and pleas for support due to the multitude of unanswered questions created and unresolved by the Agency's actions. Many of the issues that FSOs have been asking for AFSA support are addressed by the FAQ and other documents. However, there remain several areas that the Agency must address. Below are some of the key issues that FSOs continue to request support from AFSA and that AFSA is unable to provide as they can only be answered by the Agency.

Questions:

1. Waiver to extend RIF date: Prior to the RIF notice, FSOs submitted requests for extensions to their tours (postpone RIF date) for medical or family (educational) needs. While some had their dates extended to 9/2 others did not. There does not appear to be any rationale for why one FSO received a waiver and others did not. Additionally, since March 31, many FSOs have requested/appealed for compassionate extensions for medical or educational needs but have yet to hear any positive or negative responses from Agency leaders (see 25 STATE 32620).
 - a. Who should a FSO appeal to for a compassionate waiver?
 - b. How long will the Agency take to provide an answer?
 - c. What are the criteria for receiving a waiver?
2. Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA): FSOs are seeing that HSTA will end on their individual RIF date. It is unclear why HSTA would stop prior to its normal 60-day limit. Terminating HSTA has a negative financial impact on FSOs who are now required to stay at Post as they are considered Active Duty and unable to depart early. In the Agency's letter to AFSA on March 28, Lewin stated, "When they return to the United States, they may receive Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA) to assist with establishing themselves in the United States in accordance with the applicable regulations."
 - a. Explain the rationale for eliminating HSTA after the RIF date and provide specific policy or regulation that dictates its termination.



- b. Is the Agency's intent now to not follow through with the above pledge by Lewin?
- 3. CTAP and ICTAP: There remains confusion about if CTAP and ICTAP are available to FSOs and FSLs. OMB guidance and resources provided by the Agency do sufficiently respond to the eligibility questions.
 - a. Are FSOs and FSLs eligible under CTAP and ICTAP?
 - b. What are the benefits of each and how does a FSO/FSL ensure their participation and access?
- 4. FSI per diem termination and PCS dates: AFSA has heard from FSO staff at FSI or other language training venues that their per diem will be terminated and they are being required to PCS by May 30. This action has a financial impact on language students who have leases that cannot be terminated under existing policy as they are not transferring to an overseas assignment. Additionally, language students with families also face an undue hardship of forcing their children to end their school year early and prior to final exams and other events.
 - a. It is unclear why this action is happening. Explain the rationale for forcing language students to return to their terminal addresses now and eliminating their per diem?
- 5. Agency pledge to provide job placement support: On March 28, AFSA was informed that, "The Agency intends to provide the Foreign Service Institute retirement seminar and job search program for employees who are retiring (voluntary or involuntary). FSI is currently determining how they can expand their offering to make this available to more employees."
 - a. When will these courses begin?
 - b. Will they be open to all FSOs and FSLs?

Other Issues that the Agency needs to address:

- 1. Continuing Service Agreements (CSA): AFSA has asked multiple times for the Agency to waive all CSAs (FSO and FSL). The Agency has yet to provide a statement on CSAs to the workforce. Given the involuntary nature of the RIF, we again urge the Agency to waive all CSAs and have requested that Sec of State Rubio to rule on the issue.
- 2. Retirement, Severance, and Annual Leave Pay: AFSA continues to receive dozens of questions, daily, from FSOs on retirement and severance pay. We strongly urge the Agency to host FSO only retirement calls in the coming weeks. We suggest that HCTM hold calls similar to the ones Jim Walker held in February but specifically focus on the FSPS system and FS severance. At a minimum, these calls need to address:
 - a. How is prior government service calculated and included in retirement and severance pay calculations?
 - b. What steps does a FSO need to take to defer or postpone retirement?



- c. Clearly explain the different types of retirement eligibilities (for example: MRA/10, 50/25, and 62/5) for those who are not immediately eligible to retire due to the RIF.
 - c. When can an FSO expect to receive their severance pay? If an FSO receives severance and takes a USG position in the future, will they be required to pay it back and if so, is it prorated for time out of government service? What locality pay rate is used DC versus overseas comparability pay?
 - d. How is one's annual leave payout calculated (overseas versus DC locality pay) and when will it be received?
3. STATE Department hiring plan: AFSA is aware that STATE intends to hire staff to replace former USAID staff. This was noted in the CN that was sent to the Hill the same day RIF notices were issued. Notably, the CN stated that STATE does not have the technical capacity to fulfill USAID's roles. AFSA is also aware that STATE intends to hire staff as LNAs with the intent to have people onboarded by July 2 to avoid service interruptions. To that end and as we requested on March 31, the Agency needs to address the following:
- a. When will STATE begin hiring? And what if the timeline for hiring and onboarding?
 - b. Will this be an open competition or limited to former USAID staff?
 - c. In the absence of a RIF registry and Reemployment Eligibility List, how with STATE and the Agency ensure that USAID FSOs and FSLs are provided appropriate consideration?

Finally, AFSA respectfully requests again that senior FS leaders host a town hall with FSOs and FSLs. AFSA has been hosting weekly calls with FSOs and FSLs since March 13 and hosted several ad hoc calls prior to March 13th. We are repeatedly asked questions that only Agency leadership can answer. It is past time for leadership to address staff. The FS deserves to hear from its senior FS leadership.

We look forward to seeing the Agency address the above questions and issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Chester".

Randy Chester
USAID AFSA Vice President