

Thank You, AFSA!

I am writing to express my gratitude to the American Foreign Service Association, and particularly to the AFSA staff and Governing Board, for your support during my period of extended administrative leave (Dec. 18, 2012, through Aug. 19, 2013).

As many *Journal* readers know, I was among four State Department employees placed on administrative leave following the department's knee-jerk decision to remove us from our positions, in response to alleged fears of congressional backlash to the Benghazi Accountability Review Board report.

AFSA never abandoned me, and continued to provide sage, sound legal and practical advice throughout a very arduous period. It did so despite pressure from the department to politicize what was essentially a human resources issue.

I have a renewed faith in AFSA, in its mission and in its leadership's capacity to provide a bulwark against politicized attempts to erode, if not eliminate, the rights of hard-working, dedicated State Department employees. These include the right to due process, notification and privacy—rights to which we are entitled as citizens of this republic.

Raymond D. Maxwell

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Dissent and All that Jazz

As a foreign policy adviser serving at the Pentagon, I found your September issue on AFSA's dissent awards very interesting. Just for fun, I canvassed my office to see what Defense Department personnel would say about the idea of a dissent channel. The general consensus was that a formal dissent channel would not work well in the military, although there are

certainly ways to make individual views known.

For example, the Ideas Program rewards those suggesting money-saving ideas with cash bonuses of up to \$10,000. However, that program does not deal with policy, but with matters like better ways to repair a Humvee.

Any military member could also draft a letter and send it around his or her boss and up the chain of command. But that would be seen as very bad form in this highly hierarchical organization. In fact, no one in my office had ever heard of anyone submitting such a letter.

One can also report fraud and abuse to the DOD Inspector General. But there is no formal way to dissent on policy, and certainly no award is offered to recognize contrary thinking.

People in my office saw the idea of a dissent channel as very culturally "State." One observed that "State is like a jazz ensemble, and DOD is like an orchestra." State is made up of small teams that improvise (embassies, for example), so a dissent channel makes sense culturally and organizationally. Dissent in an orchestra, where every player has a set part and where every note must be played exactly as written, would sound jarring and throw other players off.

Shawn Dorman's article in the same issue, "AFSA Constructive Dissent Award Winners: Where Are They Now?" underlined how the culture of dissent and improvisation works in practice. It gave me a better idea of what meaningful dissent might look like, and convinced me that my career could survive dissent if undertaken properly.

As a consular officer, I also found the

article on citizenship—"What Makes Someone an American Citizen?" by James Rider and Shane Myers—enlightening.

Great writing, attractive layout, really good issue.

Phil Skotte

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Landau, Letelier and Townley

Congratulations on Steve Honley's terrific profile of Ambassador George W. Landau in the September issue. This is perhaps the finest article I've yet read in the *Journal*.

In Amb. Landau's discussion of the Orlando Letelier murder, I was interested to see that he credits "anti-Castro Cubans" with plac-

ing the bomb that killed the former Chilean foreign minister in 1976 as he drove on Sheridan Circle in northwest Washington, D.C. The majority of sources I have consulted indicate that, while he had assistance from Cuban-American activists, American expatriate Michael Townley was the person who actually attached the explosive device to Letelier's car.

When that occurred, I was in Brazil on my first Foreign Service tour. I will never forget hearing the disturbing news that a deadly bombing had taken place in our nation's capital.

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The Case for Professionalism

I congratulate AFSA and the *Journal* on the September issue, which focused on AFSA's dissent and performance awards.

