



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

On behalf of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) and the 31,000 active-duty and retired members of the Foreign Service we represent, I would like to thank you for your leadership on international affairs and unyielding commitment to protecting the interests of Foreign Service employees and their families.

I am writing to urge your immediate action to finalize the confirmations of tenure and promotion of over 1,700 individuals from four foreign affairs agencies (Department of State, USAID, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Foreign Commercial Service). Many are currently serving in hardship posts, often without family members.

We are very appreciative of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez for addressing this issue during the Committee's Business Meeting yesterday, but to finalize it we urge you to include the tenure and promotion lists in the Senate's Executive Calendar at the earliest opportunity. These American men and women, who have patiently waited for months, have jobs that are essential to our national security, economic prosperity and job creation. They should wait no longer.

As we explained to Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker, over 200 of these employees are awaiting confirmation of their promotions into or within the Senior Foreign Service. These members are affected financially in two distinct ways. First, the pay increases earned as a result of their promotions cannot be paid until attestation by the president, nor can the promotions be back-dated so as to overcome this loss of remuneration. Second, unless the promotions are confirmed and attested before April 15, 2014, they are not eligible to be reviewed for, or to receive, performance pay. In addition, uncertainty besets the onward assignments of these 200 members. Failure to confirm these officers as members of the Senior Foreign Service affects the ability of consulates, embassies and USAID missions to conduct the business of the United States overseas.

Over 900 of the remaining officers are awaiting commissioning as Foreign Service officers and secretaries in the diplomatic service, almost half of whom have been waiting close to a year. Several of them are approaching the limit of their 5-year Limited Career Appointments. If that expires without their being commissioned, they are supposed to leave the Foreign Service in accordance with Section 309 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 USC §3949.) Moreover, as untenured officers, they are ineligible to receive some pay differentials for positions, which they currently encumber. Overall, this is

having a severe effect on their morale and their eligibility for onward assignments. Unfortunately, this prolonged wait and uncertainty is coloring their impressions of public service at the beginning of their careers.

Finally, over 600 new Foreign Service officers, just starting their Limited Career Appointments, have not yet received commissions as consular officers. Without a Consular Commission, these entry-level officers are technically not authorized to adjudicate visas and perform other consular work. In addition, the possession of a Consular Commission is generally a prerequisite to the granting by a host nation of all necessary diplomatic privileges and immunities under the Vienna Convention.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and support of the Foreign Service. Should you have any questions, please have someone from your staff contact AFSA's Director of Advocacy Javier Cuebas at (202) 944-5517 or at cuebas@afsa.org.

Sincerely,

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Robert J. Silverman
President

CC: The Honorable Dick Durbin, U.S. Senator, Assistant Majority Leader
The Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State
The Honorable Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator
The Honorable Kenneth E. Hyatt, U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade
Administration, Acting Under Secretary for International Trade
The Honorable Phil Karsting, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Administrator