

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)
FY26 Appropriations Testimony
Prepared for the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Regarding the State Department, International Affairs Budget, and U.S. Foreign Service
Workforce

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 bills, AFSA is writing to respectfully request robust funding for the U.S. Foreign Service at the Department of State and the International Affairs Budget (IAB) as a whole. Maintaining a robust diplomatic capability and workforce is vital to preserving America's global leadership role.

Our nation needs missions with fully staffed teams of diplomats and development professionals in the field keeping threats at bay and safeguarding America's safety and prosperity—combating the conditions that enable terrorism to take root, protecting against pandemics, and promoting the rule of law and international rules and norms that level the playing field for U.S. companies to compete and thrive. **Make no mistake; the FY26 request represents a full-blown retreat of our global leadership role and diplomatic prowess – at a time when it is needed more than ever.**

AFSA strongly opposes the proposed draconian cuts to the Department of State and the International Affairs Budget (IAB) as a whole. We ask the subcommittees to reject the FY26 budget request and support the U.S. Foreign Service and its workforce with a robust allocation. The Foreign Service has a high return on investment for a tiny percentage of the overall budget. Its members build the relationships that enable Americans to conduct business around the world, keeping threats at bay and reducing the need for military action.

However, the FY26 President's Budget Request includes a total of just \$9.6 billion for the State Department and international assistance programs. This amount assumes the approval of rescissions and represents an 85 percent cut below the FY25 level of \$61.1 billion. Even without approval of \$21.6 billion in rescinded funds, the requested number of just \$31.2 billion would cut funding in half from FY25. The request also asks for an employment ceiling of 19,250 positions and a net decrease of 1,323 below the FY25 estimate, which includes members of the Civil Service and Foreign Service.

Meanwhile, the State Department reorganization already calls for a reduction-in-force (RIF) of up to 1,873 personnel assigned to domestic offices. Per the FY26 State Department Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), "the restructuring is not reflected in the request." Without considering the reorganization, there is no way to accurately assess how the request

would deplete our diplomatic capability. The CBJ also includes just \$358.4 million for “the integration of certain foreign assistance functions and activities previously covered by USAID, enabling 217 direct hire positions and related support costs.” At this point, there is no way of knowing whether these 217 positions will be enough to administer programs previously overseen by USAID and funded by Congress.

If the United States retreats diplomatically, given the reduction in funding, we leave a vacuum that *will* be filled by our rivals. State Department reporting has also made clear that susceptibility to PRC influence is high in countries without Senate-confirmed ambassadors. China now has more posts overseas than the U.S., and American diplomats are outnumbered five to one in African countries. As of June 12th 2025, there were 106 U.S. ambassadorial vacancies around the world. In the face of aggressive competition, the opportunity costs of leaving American embassies short staffed and without confirmed, empowered ambassadors, including our experienced career ambassadors, are rapidly increasing. This retreat erodes our nation’s diplomatic power at our own peril.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.