

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4706

September 05, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
House Appropriations Committee
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger,

As Co-Chairs of the New Democrat Coalition National Security Task Force, we believe that ensuring the safety and security of our country and all Americans is a fundamental responsibility of Congress. U.S. national security interests are advanced by the diplomatic and aid work performed through the Department of State, and we thank you for your support of the Department's vital mission, as demonstrated by the Fiscal Year 2020 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill. To restore U.S. global leadership and ensure the security and stability of our nation and the world, we must vigorously support diplomatic efforts through the Department of State, which expand the reach of American values, democracy, the rule of law, economic prosperity, and health and safety.

We are deeply concerned by a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report which found that Foreign Service vacancies at the Department of State may undermine U.S. foreign policy objectives and increase national security risks. Critical personnel vacancies have also remained in senior leadership and politically appointed positions, including ambassadorships. Failure to fill key roles at the State Department is a disservice to our country, to the individuals who risk their lives to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives, and to the taxpayers who expect us to defend them and their interests, at home and abroad. We believe that these vacancies undermine our ability to maintain peace and security, and to promote American values and vital interests, throughout the globe.

That is why during consideration of H.R.2740, which included appropriations for the Department of State and Foreign Operations, we offered an amendment¹ with the intent of encouraging the administration to implement the recommendations of that report, and requested the GAO expand its study to include vacancies in senior leadership and politically appointed positions at the Department of State. In order to meet the foreign policy, diplomacy, aid, and national security priorities and objectives of the United States, we need to better understand the impact of those vacancies. We were pleased that this amendment was adopted during House consideration and

¹ Offered en bloc (no. 105 of H.Amdt.381). Rules print amendment no. 80 to Division D.
<https://rules.house.gov/bill/116/hr-2740#rule-information>

respectfully request your support to include in the conference report explanatory language that reinforces the critical role of the Foreign Service and the necessity to fill these vacancies.

The diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance the Department of State promotes can make the world a safer and more prosperous place, and in turn can make us a safer and more prosperous nation. Those who work at the Department of State are dedicated public servants, acting in the interest of our nation in order to promote democracy, peace, and prosperity around the world. It is time for America to assert its global leadership once again. Ensuring the Department of State can properly carry out its mission enables the Pentagon, our intelligence community, and to that end, our domestically focused agencies to better focus and execute their own objectives. We thank you again for supporting this critical work and strongly urge you to include explanatory language on the vacancies in the final version of the conference report.

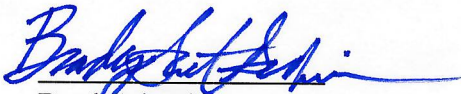
Sincerely,



Brendan Boyle
Co-Chair
National Security Task Force
New Democrat Coalition



Anthony Brown
Co-Chair
National Security Task Force
New Democrat Coalition



Brad Schneider
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