



American Foreign Service Association

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April 21, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy:

On behalf of the 14,000 members of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), please accept our sincere appreciation for your leadership on a number of fronts of vital importance to our members. Our community is grateful to call you a genuine friend of the Foreign Service.

I am writing to you today in reference to a key management and morale issue that was partially solved in the recently passed omnibus appropriations bill for FY09 spending, but, unfortunately, has not been entirely fixed. The issue relates to the rapidly widening pay disparity between Washington-based Foreign Service personnel and those on assignment overseas. The pay disparity now stands at 23.1 percent and by next year that gap will grow further.

As you know, your subcommittee wisely appropriated funds to close the gap in FY09. Despite all the progress that has been made in both chambers in the last session and early in this one, our great fear, one that we believe you can help us avoid, is that a fix will remain allusive. We know that you fully understand that Foreign Service members should not be penalized for serving abroad with a 23.1 percent pay cut. It is our sincere hope that you, Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Kerry, and your House colleagues can work out a solution to attach authorization language to the FY09 supplemental request that will allow the appropriate agencies to spend the monies that were appropriated to them in FY09 to close the gap. Without the necessary authorization language that passed both the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the last session of Congress, the monies cannot be spent for the purpose of fixing this severe management problem. If Congress does not act on this issue now another opportunity will be lost.

We ask for your leadership in addressing this critical issue. Again, AFSA is most grateful for your support and friendship. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

John K. Naland
President