



American Foreign Service Association

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February 6, 2008

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HB-26 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey:

As you begin consideration of the President's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request for international affairs spending, the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) urges that particular focus be placed on funding which enhances the civilian component of our nation's power and also on additional resources designed to address personnel management concerns.

It is imperative that the next President be able to turn to a fully staffed and well-trained Foreign Service when confronted with foreign challenges. Unfortunately, the civilian component of U.S. national power has been weakened over the years by inadequate funding in an era of greater expectations. An accumulating stack of blue-ribbon reports document large staffing and training gaps in the State Department and USAID. The Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request begins to close those gaps by creating over 1,000 new Foreign Service positions.

While AFSA respects the difficult circumstances you face in light of tight budgets and the climate of broader national economic concerns, the Foreign Service staffing piece of the budget request is vital and funding support is urgent. Inadequate funding for diplomatic engagement and staffing has resulted in the hampering our nation's ability to more aggressively endeavor for peace and stability. Our Foreign Service professionals need better tools and resources to operate effectively.

Further, Congress must be mindful of the collective morale of the Foreign Service just as it has been rightfully considerate of those who serve our country in uniform. This budget request aims to secure funding to correct a growing pay inequity related to Washington, D.C. locality pay. The bottom line is that those serving abroad do not receive this adjustment, so they take a 20.89% pay cut when they transfer overseas. The problem has become acutely worse and is deeply affecting morale in the Foreign Service to the point where many, despite their loyalty and patriotism, consider other professional pursuits.

We appreciate your continued support. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

John K. Naland
President