



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 29, 2008

**CORRECT THE PAY INEQUITY**  
**FOR THE FOREIGN SERVICE ABROAD**

**Current Co-Sponsors (12):** Tom Davis, Honda, Jackson-Lee, Kirk, Meeks,  
James Moran, Payne, David Scott, Van Hollen, Watson, Wexler, Wolf.

Dear Colleague:

The U.S. Foreign Service (FS) is on the diplomatic frontlines -- forging positive relationships for the American public abroad. These representatives are accustomed to hardship assignments and increasingly are being called upon to serve in the developing world, often far from embassies, and in countries where political violence is the norm. In responding to this call, they are serving courageously, separated from their families, and putting their lives on the line.

The 110<sup>th</sup> Congress has the opportunity – and the responsibility – to rectify an aspect of the FS compensation system that is increasingly unfair. When locality pay was implemented in the United States for federal government employees, FS personnel working inside the country were included in those receiving the benefit, but not those serving outside the country. Over time, the disparity in pay between those receiving locality pay in Washington, D.C. and those serving abroad has dramatically increased to 20.89%. Those transferring from Washington to places like Sri Lanka, Syria, Zambia, El Salvador and Bosnia & Herzegovina now must take a pay cut. This disparity will only continue to grow until it is legislatively corrected.

The financial disincentive for FS personnel to work abroad is impacting the morale of the Service. In their responses to a survey released in January 2008, 70 percent of nearly 4,300 active-duty FS members ranked correction of the overseas comparability pay inequity as their top priority. Almost 44 percent of those surveyed indicated that they would be less likely to remain in the Foreign Service for their full career due to this as well as other developments in the last few years.

Despite several near misses over the years, Congress has come up short in solving the problem. We are making another attempt through “The Foreign Service Overseas Pay Equity Act” (H.R. 3202), which would extend the Washington, DC locality pay rate to all FS members regardless of where they serve. *This solution was included in H.R. 2601, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 2006 and 2007, which passed the House in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress but which did not pass the Senate for unrelated reasons.* Secretary Rice and her recent predecessors have long advocated for the establishment of a fair global pay system for the FS. Funds to begin to establish a global rate of pay are contained in the President's FY09 budget request.

Also, in recognition of the increasingly dangerous postings that many FS personnel are expected to staff, HR 3202 aims to address a long overdue need to update the benefit provided to family members should a FS member be killed while in service. *This provision was included in H.R. 2828 which passed the House on October 2, 2007, but which is stalled in the Senate.*

This Congress has an obligation to resolve the pay equity problem without further delay and to update the death gratuity benefit. Our country must make a commitment to supporting our diplomatic corps, for their own well-being and in the interest of the continued viability of our country's foreign diplomacy.

If you have questions or are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Sheri Rickert in Rep. Chris Smith's office at ext. 6-7812 or Stephanie Gidigbi in Rep. Payne's office at ext. 5-3436.

Sincerely,

  
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Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress

  
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Donald M. Payne  
Member of Congress