



PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

SOS for DOS

By JOHN K. NALAND

AFSA congratulates President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden on their electoral victory. At press time, the Secretary of State-designate had not been named. But AFSA hopes for the traditional pre-inauguration



meeting with the Secretary-designate to discuss the resource and management needs of diplomacy and development assistance. AFSA also looks forward to meeting with the USAID Administrator-designate and other incoming officials. Below are the highlights of our message.

U.S. diplomacy is in crisis. While the inauguration of a new president will likely produce an initial rebound in America's standing in world opinion, that honeymoon will be short-lived unless the next administration takes concrete steps to strengthen diplomacy and development assistance. Issues requiring immediate attention include:

- **Staffing:** Our foreign affairs agencies are hobbled by a human capital crisis. An October report by the American Academy of Diplomacy — whose membership includes all living former secretaries of State — called for expanding State Department diplomatic staffing by 43 percent and USAID staffing by 62 percent within five years. Funding to begin that expansion must be sought immediately.

- **Training:** Foreign Service train-

ing lags because of personnel shortages. As a result, our diplomats do not have to a sufficient degree the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for 21st-century diplomacy. We need to quickly ramp up training in areas such as foreign

languages, advanced area studies, leadership and management, job-specific functional topics and program management.

- **Benefits:** If legislation to close the Foreign Service overseas pay gap does not pass this year, ending this longstanding financial disincentive must be at the top of the next Secretary's legislative agenda. Junior and mid-level Foreign Service members simply cannot continue to lose the equivalent of one year's salary for every five years served abroad.

- **Hardship:** As the number of unaccompanied and other hardship posts has jumped in recent years, insufficient efforts have been made to reduce some of the burdens of such service. The Separate Maintenance Allowance needs to be raised. New programs should be created to help spouses find employment. Safety nets must be strengthened for those who suffer physical or emotional injury while serving our nation abroad.

- **Management:** The next Secretary must not focus solely on policy issues while ignoring the platform upon which diplomacy and development assistance are conducted. He or she should make time to lobby the

White House, Congress and the American public for resources. The Secretary should pick a deputy secretary and under secretary for management with real ability in this area.

- **Morale:** The Secretary should work to restore the morale of the career Service, which has been sapped by a growing imbalance between the burdens and rewards of service. The Secretary should speak up when critics unfairly malign the Foreign Service and diplomacy.

- **Professionalism:** The next administration should look to the Foreign Service for expert advice by scaling back the proliferation of non-career appointees, including ambassadors. On the other hand, the next Secretary should shun any career officers who meekly recommend what they think the Secretary wants to hear or who mechanically implement directives without first speaking up about likely negative consequences. Instead, the Secretary should encourage frank, constructive criticism to probe for potential pitfalls and unintended consequences in policy initiatives.

Unless these urgent steps are taken to strengthen the diplomatic element of national security, no amount of jetting around the globe by the president or Secretary will restore our nation's role as the world's leader in international affairs. Without sufficient numbers of properly resourced and well-trained diplomats and development professionals, America's engagement with the world will suffer. ■

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