



AFSA Priority Issues

Career Development and Professional Capacity: In the 21st-century it is critical that America has a professional, innovative, and diverse workforce. AFSA continues to advocate for additional Foreign Service personnel to achieve a permanent training capacity. At the same time, it encourages the foreign affairs agencies to establish clear professional development paths for our workforce in order to ensure the retention of top-notch well-trained talent given the growth in the last decade. The foreign affairs agencies should review their security clearances processes to ensure that employees are able to serve around the world – without minimal restrictions – and that the government is able to take full advantage of their linguistic skills and regional knowledge. Ambassadors (also known as Chiefs of Missions) are the President’s personal representatives overseas and lead our engagement with foreign governments. AFSA has developed guidelines for successful Chief of Mission performance referencing the 1980 Foreign Service Act. We encourage stakeholders to adopt and apply these guidelines in their review of nominees.

Action Needed: Appropriate funds for a professional, innovative, and diverse workforce. Support transparent qualifications for all ambassadorial nominees.

Overseas Security: The Foreign Service continues to serve in a dangerous and unpredictable world. It is important that we provide our diplomats with the training and resources necessary to properly conduct their missions. Engaging foreign publics involves security risks, and we should take all measures needed to mitigate these risks, while simultaneously protecting the employees’ ability to engage. We support the full implementation of the Benghazi Accountability Review Board (ARB) recommendations, particularly those focusing on employee security awareness and language training. AFSA, as the employee’s collective voice, should have pre- and post-decisional involvement in the “how and where” employees serve to ensure that they can do so safely and effectively.

Action Needed: Support the risk mitigation measures identified in the Benghazi ARB to ensure employee security, training, and engagement initiatives.

Overseas Comparability Pay (OCP): Overseas Comparability Pay (OCP) is critical to the development and retention of a competitive workforce. OCP restores the basic pay equity between Washington, D.C. and overseas assignments for entry and mid-level Foreign Service employees that existed prior to the government-wide implementation of locality pay. Locality pay is a pay adjustment intended to raise base salaries of federal employees nearer to the level of salaries paid in the private sector for comparable work in specific labor markets. Right now, there is a structural disincentive to serve overseas for the working rank and file as they receive only 2/3 of locality pay, while colleagues in certain non-foreign affairs agencies receive the full amount. The Supplemental Appropriation Act, 2009 (P.L. 111-32) authorized the Secretary of State to begin implementing OCP adjustments under Section 1113. This section also gave the Secretary administrative flexibility in determining the phase-in schedule, although subsequent provisions of law have limited implementation to just the first two phases. Post differentials and allowances are not equivalent to OCP, which is part of base pay and is not related to specific post of assignment, working conditions or cost of living.

Action Needed: Permanently authorize and appropriate the third tranche of Overseas Comparability Pay for the Foreign Service

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), established in 1924, is the professional association and labor union of the United States Foreign Service. With more than 16,000 dues-paying members, AFSA is the voice of Foreign Service, representing employees from the Department of State, the Agency for International Development (USAID), the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS), the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

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