

The Honorable Harry Reid
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

We the undersigned business and professional associations are writing to support the swift confirmation by the U.S. Senate of the career members of the Foreign Service for the positions of ambassador for which they have been nominated. We believe the actions of U.S. ambassadors are critically important to America's national and economic security interests overseas.

The U.S. ambassador speaks on behalf of the President, Congress, and the people of the United States. The U.S. ambassador has the access to meet with and convey messages to the highest levels of the host government. The presence of a U.S. ambassador abroad demonstrates the commitment of the United States to diplomatic engagement, including on key issues of commercial and trade policy. The absence of an ambassador risks conveying the unintended message that the U.S. does not value this bilateral relationship with the country in question.

As business leaders, we deeply appreciate the support of U.S. embassies on commercial, investment, and trade matters, and know that embassies thrive with the leadership of their chiefs of mission, the ambassadors. We are concerned with the current number of ambassadorial vacancies abroad and with the message that it sends – and the lost opportunities for American business and investment that those vacancies represent. We regret that twenty percent of the African countries represented at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit held in Washington in August were without an American ambassador to follow up on business opportunities.

We urge you to work to ensure the expeditious Senate confirmation of nominees once they are voted out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This includes clearing the current backlog of nominees, which includes six career nominees who were nominated over one year ago.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Foreign Service Association
Business Council for International Understanding
International Stability Operations Association
United States Council for International Business