April 4, 2014

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
United States Senate

Dear Senator McConnell:

I write to you on behalf of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) to express my deep concern that the United States Senate has failed to take action on the nominations of 18 career Foreign Service Officers to serve as ambassadors in important leadership positions around the world. The nominations have been pending for over nine months in some cases. This takes place while our nation has 54 vacant ambassadorial-level positions worldwide. In Africa, a quarter of all the continent’s countries have no U.S. ambassador at a time when we need a high-level on-the-ground presence to keep an eye on not only security threats there, but also on significant opportunities for growth in trade and investment. For example, Mauritania is vacant at a time of serious security challenges in northern Africa, while Tanzania and Namibia offer potential sources of rare earth minerals on which the Chinese currently have a virtual monopoly.

America’s national security in a dangerous world depends on using all of the tools available to us. Talented and experienced career diplomats provide the most effective means to promote American economic growth, secure cooperation from our allies, counter those who would seek to roll back the advances of democracy, and promote respect for human rights. Like members of the U.S. military, career diplomats serve in the most challenging environments, often at great personal risk. I invite you to view the memorial walls in the Department of State to see the names of our fallen colleagues.
Each of the career nominees has decades of diplomatic experience and brings unquestioned qualifications to lead her or his respective missions. The months-long delays in the confirmation process have caused substantial personal hardships for the nominees and their families, and are a waste of their talents and of government resources. It is in our country’s interest that they be confirmed to assume their leadership roles on behalf of the American people in promoting American economic growth and supporting our national security.

I have enclosed a list of the names of the pending nominees and the dates of their nomination. I would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss these issues further. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Silverman
President and Chairman of the Board of Governors

CC: Secretary of State John Kerry
Senator Harry Reid