
CONTINUED ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC LEADERSHIP IS DANGEROUS FOR AMERICA

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Congress and the Administration must work together to ensure America has strong leadership to advance our security and economic interests around the world.

Since Secretary of State Mike Pompeo took office in April 2018, he has been committed to fully staffing the State Department. He lifted the hiring freeze in May, saying “We need our men and women on the ground, executing American diplomacy with great vigor and energy, and representing our great nation... By resuming hiring of the most gifted and qualified individuals, we will ensure that we have the right people with the right skills working to advance our U.S. national interests and executing the Department’s mission in an increasingly complicated and challenging world.”

While there has been progress, key leadership positions remain without confirmed senior leadership at the State Department, USAID, U.S. embassies, and other U.S. international affairs agencies. More than 70 nominees are currently awaiting Senate confirmation, while more than a dozen ambassadorships still lack nominees. These vacancies encompass some of the nation’s highest ranking diplomats, including the Under Secretary for Management; Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights; Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy; and Assistant Secretaries of State for Near Eastern Affairs and East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

At a time of growing crises around the world, it is imperative that these positions be filled to advance America’s security and economic interests. Alongside a number of bipartisan Congressional statements over the last year weighing in on the personnel challenge, President Trump’s National Security Strategy recognized that “diplomacy is indispensable” and a “forward-deployed” diplomatic and development presence is critical to our ability to compete against rising powers and growing threats. Unfortunately, the absence of personnel in key positions and embassies directly undermines American leadership around the world.

PERSISTENT VACANCIES

- More than 70 nominees are currently awaiting Senate confirmation from the State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and the Export-Import Bank – all agencies funded by the International Affairs Budget.
- As of December 12, only 2 of 6 Under Secretaries of State and 14 of 22 Assistant Secretaries of State have been confirmed. 9 senior positions are awaiting Senate confirmation.
- More than 15 ambassador posts lack nominations – leaving critical leadership gaps in places like Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan, while ambassadorial nominees to more than 40 countries are still awaiting Senate confirmation.
- At USAID, 5 senior level nominees are currently awaiting Senate confirmation and 4 senior level positions still lack a nominee altogether.

Source: Washington Post/Partnership for Public Service Trump Administration Appointee Tracker.

REACTION FROM CAPITOL HILL

- “Our country’s standing in the world has been on the decline over the past decade or more, and that certainly continues. Throughout the 20th century, our allies viewed the United States as a reliable partner and a source of stability – a friend whose ideals and leadership made our world a better place. Unfortunately, today, we are not counted on as we once were. The chasm between what our leaders say and the actions that they take can have a devastating impact...In order to execute foreign policy effectively, the secretary must have a fully functional department behind him.”
 - Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) in April 2018.
- “There are many lessons learned from past organizational reform efforts, including that the 1990s cuts and hiring freezes may have saved money in the short term, but led to increased personnel costs down the line. We paid this price with the diplomatic and development surges for Afghanistan and Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. As important as it is to retain those with deep experience at Foggy Bottom, ensuring a steady inflow of entry-level diplomats and aid workers is also important. Let’s not forget that today’s second lieutenants are tomorrow’s majors and colonels.”
 - Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Chairman of the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, in the March 2018 Foreign Service Journal
- “Supporting the integrity of the State Department is a strong, bipartisan effort. Agree w/ @ LindseyGrahamSC: our diplomats are absolutely critical to addressing our global challenges. We should support our career diplomatic corps, not hollow it out.”
 - Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in March 2018
- “This is no time to be dismantling the structure and the personnel and the programs and the budget of the Department of State or USAID or our embassies and our missions overseas. Both Sec. Mattis and Sec. Pompeo said we should be doing what we can to bolster them.”
 - Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) in June 2018.
- “Together with our unmatched armed forces, the dedicated public servants at the State Department and USAID help the United States lead by example and build a foundation for peace and security in every corner of the world. ... I want to echo and re-say what you [Chairman Frelinghuysen] have already said about the staff at the State Department. These are hardworking, dedicated, patriotic people. They need assurance from us and the American people of the work that they’re doing. We hope that this bill says very loudly what you have allowed us to say with your allocation, and that is these dollars we spend on this soft power of the U.S. is critical. Together with the hard power of the military, this is a great team.”
 - U.S. Representative Hal Rogers (R-KY) in June 2018