

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2017

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are alarmed that many State Department appointments remain unfilled and without a nominee, including more than 35 senior leaders and managers, 58 ambassadorial posts, and a dozen other key advisors requiring Senate confirmation.

We need a fully staffed and funded State Department to protect U.S. interests and values abroad. Yet these vacancies threaten to undermine our leadership on many of the national security crises we face today. The United States cannot conduct diplomacy without diplomats, and the Senate cannot advise and consent on appointments until we have qualified nominees to consider.

We understand Secretary Tillerson is reorganizing the department to meet his needs. We suggest reviewing the first-ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review for important lessons, such as empowering the regional and functional bureaus to address issues that have too often been treated as ad-hoc. Regardless of this reorganization initiative, however, there is no scenario in which any position requiring Senate confirmation should remain vacant. Title 22 of the U.S. Code establishes these posts. Each one is critical to an effective U.S. foreign policy. Unless the law changes, you must fill them with people loyal to the State Department's mission.


Each one of our regional assistant secretaries of state remains unfilled, despite the fact that we desperately need them to craft and implement regional strategy—including in East Asia where we must unite with our allies and work with China to stop Kim Jong Un from pursuing a nuclear-capable ballistic missile that can threaten the United States. You have also neglected to nominate an assistant secretary of state for diplomatic security to oversee the protection of our embassies, even as the threats from terrorism, state actors, cyber criminals, and others wishing to do harm to our diplomats and their families are on the rise.

Inexplicably, you have also failed to nominate an ambassador to the Republic of Korea, even though the Republic is a key ally in our effort to maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula. We understand that you plan to visit Saudi Arabia on your first overseas trip, and yet you have failed to nominate the ambassador to the Kingdom. In France, we have no ambassador even as the country emerges from one of the most consequential presidential elections in decades—one that will affect the future of the European continent.

Meanwhile, where ambassador positions remain vacant, the deputy chiefs of mission are carrying out the responsibilities of ambassadors. They are incredibly capable professionals, but their job is to run the day-to-day functions of the embassy and to allow the ambassadors to serve as our emissaries, which includes assisting American companies to gain access to new markets for their products. Without ambassadors, our economic and political relationships in these countries will wither.

These are but a few of the vacant positions that remain central to a strong, successful U.S. foreign policy. We urge you to act quickly to fill these posts with individuals who are committed to promoting American values, strengthening U.S. foreign policy, and solving the many challenges our country faces in the world today. Failing to act expeditiously puts our national security in peril.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ  
U.S. Senator



EDWARD J. MARKEY  
U.S. Senator



TAMMY BALDWIN  
U.S. Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE  
U.S. Senator



MARTIN HEINRICH  
U.S. Senator



MICHAEL F. BENNET  
U.S. Senator



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY  
U.S. Senator

Cc: The Vice President  
Secretary of State Rex Tillerson