

October 14, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

As a diverse group of foreign policy, development, environmental, global health, and faith-based organizations, we are unified in our earnest support for passage of a State Department authorization bill this year.

We convey our sincere thanks to you for your efforts to advance last year's Department of State Authorization Act of 2021 (H.R. 1157) and for advocating for its inclusion in the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 117-81). The successful enactment of the Department of State Authorization Act for the first time in almost twenty years is particularly notable due to its bipartisan support at an especially partisan time, and we are grateful for your work to strengthen diplomacy, development, and foreign assistance within our foreign policy toolkit. One-off authorization language every two decades is not enough to ensure the State Department is fully equipped to advance our national interests or to protect our national security in the face of today's complex and ever evolving challenges. It is critical that Congress build upon this momentum, seek another bipartisan victory, and pass a State Department authorization bill this year.

As you know, State Department authorization legislation is necessary for Congress to exercise its critical oversight function and influence of American foreign policy by reforming, reorganizing, and modernizing the State Department. As the United States confronts a critical juncture in world affairs, the Department of State Authorization Act of 2022 presents an important opportunity for Congress to articulate American foreign policy objectives and approach. This bill has strong bipartisan support and will make important updates and improvements to State Department authorities, functions, and practices such as the Accountability Review Board process, recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce, cyber diplomacy capabilities, and the United States' global diplomatic posture.

The world has changed dramatically in the twenty years that elapsed between the two most recent State Department authorization bills. During this time, we saw the thaw of U.S.-Cuba relations, the invasion and withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, the geopolitical rise of China, the growing existential threat of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and democratic backsliding around the world. Yet, the State Department, operating under the authorities granted to it in the 2002 iteration of the State Department authorization, could not nimbly adapt to the shifting geopolitical sands, and the execution of our foreign policies suffered as a result.

We cannot afford to wait another twenty years to pass a State Department authorization bill. By not regularly passing authorizing legislation, we harm our national security and foreign policy strength, we weaken our ability to agilely respond to new international threats and opportunities in a complex global landscape, and we handicap our U.S. foreign service professionals by slow-walking much needed reforms and modernization efforts. Congress must pass authorization language for the State Department annually as it does for the Defense Department – building that muscle memory begins here.

Once again, we commend your efforts to pass a State Department Authorization Act last year, and sincerely thank you for your commitment to principled American foreign policy. We stand ready to work with you, and we respectfully urge you to show decisive leadership and support swift passage of a State Department authorization bill this year.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Peacebuilding  
American Academy of Diplomacy  
American Foreign Service Association  
Foreign Policy for America  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Humanity United Action  
InterAction  
J Street  
Oxfam America  
The Borgen Project  
The Nature Conservancy  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)