



DEMOCRATS ABROAD

Funding the State Department and other foreign-service agencies to protect Americans living abroad and promote American interests globally

The United States Department of State advances American economic interests abroad, especially small businesses seeking to export American-made goods. Our State Department protects tourists, students studying abroad, and our military personnel. Our State Department and its foreign operations activities are integral to our national security. Our State Department shapes the legal, business, and cultural environment in which U.S. citizens live abroad, with an impact going far beyond consular services but certainly including that role. (For example, foreign aid of all kinds is less than 1% of the federal budget while foreign trade in a typical year accounts for 30% of U.S. GDP.) We rely on our State Department in order to obtain Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, Social Security cards, passports and passport renewals, and important information on voting from abroad.

Democrats Abroad exists to serve the interests of Americans living abroad. We are intimately aware of the ramifications of the United States' diplomatic reputation. Aside from the direct services we receive from Consulates, we benefit from the influence exercised by Embassies in our countries of residence. All Americans benefit from the relationships fostered by their indispensable work. **Democrats Abroad opposes cuts to the funding of the State Department and reckless reductions in State Department personnel.**

The current Secretary of State is not an advocate for the crucial mission of the State Department, intending to cut the number of diplomats and civil servants without strategic planning or discernment. The President's budget suggestions call for an

almost one-third reduction of State Department spending overall. The employees of the Foreign Service are always exposed to risks and danger, with many dying in service to their country. Haphazard personnel reductions will needlessly increase these risks. Furthermore, the White House has failed to announce almost all Senate-confirmed positions related to foreign service, including ambassadorships and assistant secretaries.

Our diplomats represent the best of American values and the face of American culture among the local populations. Our exchange programs – such as Fulbright Commissions, EducationUSA, and the International Visitor Leadership Program – provide a better understanding of the United States to key sectors of society and future leaders. These programs are cost-effective and, in many countries, supplement and support military programs. Soft power is smart and effective.

Democrats Abroad asks Congress:

- to vote NO on any budget cuts to the State Department;
- to propose legislation that expands foreign aid for health and humanitarian purposes as well as the enhancement of institutions combating world poverty and promoting sustainable development;
- to propose legislation that establishes an IRS advisory office in each region abroad to help Americans comply without unreasonable expenditure, with their often complex duty to meet tax obligations while abroad; and
- to keep USAID as an independent establishment from the State Department.