

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **American Academy of Diplomacy Urges Presidential Candidates to Support High Qualifications for Ambassadors**

*Washington, DC.* The American Academy of Diplomacy this week issued a letter to both presidential candidates **Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain**, urging them to consider a set of stringent, essential qualifications in the nomination of future US Ambassadors. The new President will have a unique opportunity to highlight to the American people and the world the importance of diplomacy in defending US national security interests, and to America's effective engagement with increasingly complex global challenges.

"We look forward to the debate about the future of our diplomacy and our foreign policy in the coming campaign. We write to both candidates today to propose at least one policy on which we ask both of you to agree: having Ambassadors with the qualities of leadership, judgment, and management required of their demanding positions," said the letter, signed by **Academy President Ronald E. Neumann and Academy Chairman Thomas R. Pickering**.

US Ambassadors abroad have a vital role in representing America and in recommending and implementing US foreign policy objectives in the field. To successfully fulfill this mission, **the Academy believes ambassadorial candidates must possess certain essential qualities, such as:**

- Unquestioned integrity, personal discretion and self-discipline;
- Demonstrated interest and experience in foreign affairs and foreign cultures;
- Thorough knowledge of American history and values, and of American economic, commercial and political purposes – with a clear commitment to them;
- Appreciation of the dynamics of American politics, of the role of the Congress and the Executive, and the constraints upon each, and of the bureaucratic politics of Washington;
- The intellect, perception and interpersonal skills required to report accurately in both directions between the host country and Washington, and to recommend appropriate policies;
- Proficiency in communication, the ability to explain American positions persuasively to foreign governments and publics, and to address the American public as well;
- Finally, demonstrated efficiency as a leader, manager and executive, reinforced by sound judgment and strength of character to lead our missions abroad and command attention and respect in Washington.

Given the demanding tasks ambassadors confront daily in leading our diplomatic missions, **the Academy recommends the candidates commit to appointing only the most qualified ambassadors, preferably from the career Foreign Service. To assure meeting the qualifications noted above, the Academy believes a new target in the area of 10% of non-career appointees should be adopted.** This percentage has historically been at a 33% average level since President Kennedy's Administration.

**"Adopting this policy would convincingly demonstrate your commitment to effective diplomatic engagement with the world and your recognition of the unique value added the professionalism of the career Foreign Service brings to the pursuit of our nation's interests. How our next President decides who should represent the US abroad will say much about their commitment to America's global leadership,"** added Ambassadors Neumann and Pickering.

The American Academy of Diplomacy is a membership organization of former career and non-career Ambassadors and senior-level diplomats dedicated to strengthening the institution of American diplomacy.