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June 24, 2008

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The Honorable Barack Obama  
713 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Obama,

Congratulations on your nomination as the Democratic nominee for President of the United States of America.

The American Academy of Diplomacy, founded in 1983 and today representing an elected membership of 200 of the most experienced retired professional diplomats and diplomatic practitioners from other civilian services in the United States, seeks to strengthen American diplomacy by fostering high standards of qualification for, and performance in, the conduct of diplomacy. Together, the membership accounts for well over 4,000 years of combined diplomatic experience. The Academy is committed to increasing public understanding and appreciation of the contributions of diplomacy to the national interests of our great country.

As leaders of the Academy, we believe that the President who takes office on January 20, 2009 will have a unique opportunity to highlight to the American people, and our friends, allies and adversaries around the world, the importance of diplomacy as a national security tool of the United States. Among the new President's first responsibilities will be the appointment of Ambassadors to carry out America's foreign policy. Given the opportunity that we believe will exist to commit our nation to active diplomatic engagement with the world in pursuit of America's interests, the new President will need to pay close attention to these appointments. The same care will obviously need to be taken with senior appointments in the State Department and other national security agencies.

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.

Ambassadors must coordinate a staff including representatives of as many as thirty Washington agencies, each communicating directly with his or her headquarters and each devoted to particular objectives. Only the Ambassador is appointed by the president and approved by the Senate to represent America as a whole and to set priorities and reconcile objectives in

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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the field. To successfully carry out this mission, we believe that the following criteria are essential and must be considered in the nomination and confirmation of American Ambassadors:

- Unquestioned integrity, personal discretion and self-discipline;
- Demonstrated interest and experience in foreign affairs, at least in dealing with foreign cultures; preferably, personal knowledge of the country involved, its region, people and language;
- Understanding power relationships, influence and negotiation;
- 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, 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.

There have been many outstanding non-career Ambassadors appointed by recent Presidents, and we support the continuation of the appointment of some non-career Ambassadors as a way to tap the unique capacities of America in our representation abroad. But too often Ambassadorships have served as political rewards for unqualified candidates.

Accordingly, we recommend that the number of non-professional appointments be more limited than in the past and that far stricter attention be given to appointing only those fully qualified by both personal and professional background for the demanding task of leading today's American diplomatic missions.

The traditional percentage of non-career appointees as Ambassadors has generally been about one-third of total appointments since the Administration of President Kennedy. To assure meeting the qualification noted above, we believe a new target in the area of 10% should be adopted.

We ask that when you speak about the future of our foreign policy and diplomacy in your campaigns, that you commit to appointing qualified Ambassadors, generally from the career Foreign Service. Adopting this policy, both during the campaign and, if elected, for your Administration, would show your commitment to diplomatic engagement with the world and your recognition of the unique value added the career

Foreign Service brings to the pursuit of our nation's interests. It goes without saying that you should demand that the State Department produce the very best Foreign Service officers for these appointments.

We recognize that appointments at the policy level in Washington reflect somewhat different factors from those of Ambassadors in the field. But expertise in the conduct of diplomacy is no less necessary at home than abroad. We hope you will consider similar standards for domestic foreign policy appointments.

The Academy also supports adequate funding for foreign affairs. We are conducting a zero-based review of the foreign affairs budget and will make recommendations in September on the minimum resources we believe necessary to promote and protect America's interests abroad. This study is entitled the Foreign Affairs Budget of the Future (FAB) Project, and we hope that when it is finished, you might make a member of your campaign staff available to hear a briefing on its findings.

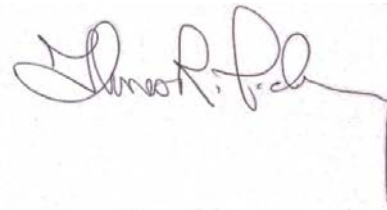
Undoubtedly, the United States faces opportunities and challenges around the world. We will not meet these challenges, or grasp the opportunities available to us, without successful American diplomacy. How our next President decides who should represent the United States abroad will say much about his or her commitment to America's global leadership.

We thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Neumann  
President



Thomas R. Pickering  
Chairman