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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

Strengthening American Diplomacy to meet today's challenges is now an urgent matter generating many papers and proposals to Congress. The American Academy of Diplomacy, a unique organization of former senior diplomats and other career and non-career national security officials, is among those calling for reform. We wish to share a few perspectives and to offer the Academy's assistance as changes are considered that are critical to effective American diplomacy.

Of the several recent studies, we are particularly impressed by that of the Harvard Kennedy Center Belfer Center (*A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century*) and one from the Council on Foreign Relations. We neither endorse nor agree with all of the points and recommendations of these studies. However, in our judgment their call for bold thinking and substantial change is correct. We also appreciate the support of the Belfer Report for two ongoing Academy legislative efforts; one to enable Foreign Service Officers abroad to operate more effectively by increasing the acceptable risk paradigm, which requires changes to the Accountability Review Board mechanism, changes in training, and changing the Foreign Service Culture, and the other proposing changes in the funding of State Department consular functions. We have begun discussing these ideas with members and staff of both parties and would welcome an opportunity to continue with you. Additionally, the Academy has consistently pointed out and now reaffirms the need for a substantial number of career officers in senatorially confirmed positions in the State Department.

We have given considerable thought to the question of whether the Congress should revise the Foreign Service Act of 1980. We believe revision of a 40-year-old law is needed but it must be done with great care. The Academy can bring a great deal of experience to a discussion of what has worked in the Act and should be retained, what needs to be updated or changed, what has failed in past reform efforts. The Academy would oppose new legislation that

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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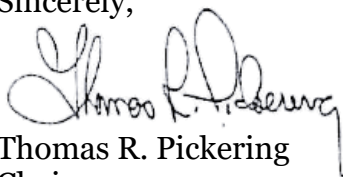
does not retain what it considers to be bedrock principles of America's professional, merit-based diplomatic corps. The Academy would like to be part of the process of considering new legislation supporting America's diplomacy.

One issue of great importance turns on diversity in the State Department and the treatment of minority officers and staff. The Academy has issued its own set of [13 recommendations](#) to address, in particular, the critical need for accountability -- both in terms of demanding performance and in real sanctions for those who continue to belittle and underutilize minority personnel. Such actions will only happen if there is genuine leadership within the Department as well as support and pressure from the Congress. We intend to continue to monitor the Department's actions. We look forward to continuing to share more detail of our ongoing work and conclusions.

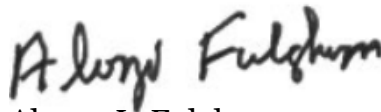
Strengthening America's diplomacy is a major requirement for achieving critical national interests. However, this will require resources as well as great ideas. Like recent studies, the Academy's own work has pointed out for over a decade the need for much expanded and revised professional diplomatic education including in commercial diplomacy. That said, improved training will only happen if the number of Foreign Service officers is expanded to allow for a cadre to be continuously trained as is the case for our senior military officers. Both Foreign and Civil Service training is a must. And training itself requires additional funding; mandates without funding cannot fix the problem.

There is much which needs to be done. Leadership from the Department will be essential. So too will be the active leadership of the Congress. The Academy encourages this work and remains dedicated to consulting with members and staff of the 117th Congress on these important measures to strengthen American diplomacy.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Pickering
Chairman



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Vice Chairman



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CC: The United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs and House Committee on Appropriations Members