

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today with concern about a critical vacancy at the Department of State. As you are aware, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. § 2651a, “There shall be in the Department of State an Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor” (DRL) responsible to the Secretary of State. We urge you to expeditiously nominate, for the advice and consent of the Senate, a properly qualified candidate for this position.

On December 20, 2017, you affirmed under Executive Order 13818 that “Human rights abuse[s] and corruption undermine the values that form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies; have devastating impacts on individuals; weaken democratic institutions; degrade the rule of law; perpetuate violent conflicts; facilitate the activities of dangerous persons; and undermine economic markets.”

We could not agree more with these sentiments. History has shown that governments that uphold the rights of their people, abide by the rule of law, and maintain strong democratic institutions, are more likely to remain at peace with one another, and are less likely to breed many of the threats that undermine international security. Likewise, good governance, strong democratic institutions, and robust rule of law and labor rights are all powerful enablers of economic prosperity. We believe actively promoting these values through diplomacy should continue to be a bedrock of American foreign policy, particularly in the face of growing threats to these very ideals.

As your recent *National Security Strategy* recognized, America’s adversaries are actively engaged in efforts to weaken democratic governments and institutions. We should make no mistake—in the face of an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape and rising challenges from autocratic states, the United States must continue to harness the power of its example as a champion of democratic values as a moral obligation, and also as a strategic imperative.

Nominating a qualified Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) would send an important signal about American leadership and commitment to these values. It is therefore more essential than ever that your administration nominate an Assistant Secretary for DRL with a skillset and background that will enable him or her to inspire activists and freedom fighters abroad; work with our democratic allies to build robust coalitions against geopolitical and ideological challengers; represent the United States in bilateral and multilateral fora to advocate for fundamental freedoms; work with non-governmental bodies to strengthen democratic institutions; and hold human rights abusers and corrupt actors accountable. The

nominee must also commit to upholding the basic rights of all people including those targeted for their work, such as journalists, labor activists and human rights defenders, and advise the Secretary of State and other cabinet members on these core issues in the context of U.S. foreign policy priorities. Our national security and foreign policy goals can only be realized through principled American leadership on these fundamental issues.

As such, we urge you to take immediate action to nominate an effective and knowledgeable leader to this key diplomatic role. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these critical issues.

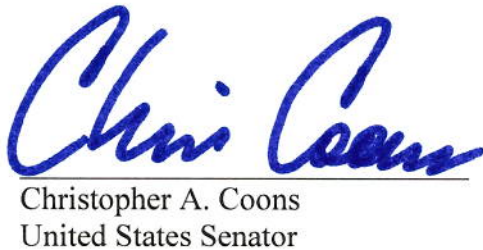
Sincerely,


Robert Menendez
United States Senator

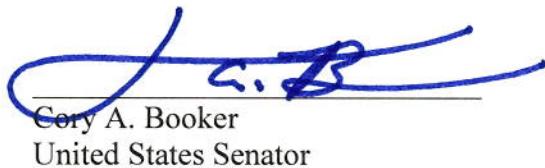

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

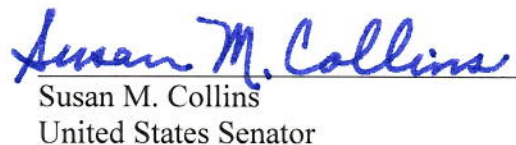

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

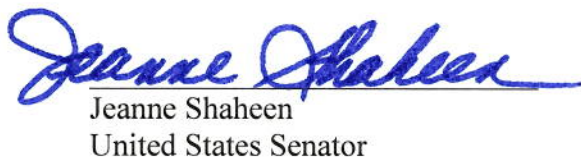

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

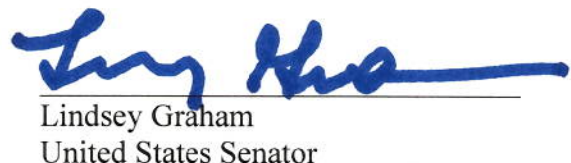

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator


James Lankford
United States Senator


Cory A. Booker
United States Senator


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Lindsey Graham
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Ben Sasse

Ben Sasse
United States Senator