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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I was pleased to hear during your confirmation hearing that you intend to “move forward as quickly as possible and fill vacancies that exist within the State Department.” There are a great many vacancies that continue to exist, both in major State Department leadership posts such as Chief Financial Officer, Director General, and four Under Secretary positions, and in critical ambassadorial posts like Australia, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia. I look forward to considering a robust package of nominations this year and to working cooperatively with you and the State Department to move them through the vetting and confirmation process.

I also want to remind you that nominees that come before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee need to be adequately vetted prior to being nominated, and their paperwork needs to be completed in a thorough, accurate, and precise manner that respects the role of this Committee in the confirmation process. Over the course of the 115th Congress, the nominations process has been unnecessarily lengthened for some nominees because of poor vetting on the part of the Administration. This poor vetting has taken a number of forms.

First, a significant number of nominees have failed to adequately fill out their questionnaires including, for example, accurately listing the groups, boards, and corporate entities of which they have been a part as well as their financial contributions to political campaigns. Other nominees have failed to disclose their involvement in multiple lawsuits or administrative proceedings, offered misleading answers to questions about knowledge of contacts with Russian officials, or made insulting and inaccurate claims about the country to which they have been nominated to serve as Ambassador.

Finally, the Committee’s vetting process has revealed that a number of nominees have demonstrated problems of temperament and judgement that should disqualify them for any position representing the United States. There are several examples, but the most visible is our Ambassador to Germany. The White House and the Majority Leader prioritized his confirmation despite widespread opposition in the Senate based on his demonstrated lack of judgment and impulse control. Sadly, in his short tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Germany, his utterly undiplomatic and offensive comments have amply justified my concerns about his judgement and, more importantly, damaged our relationship with a key ally.

Care in selecting potential nominees and diligence by the Administration in the vetting and paperwork process assists the Committee by making our own review process swifter. I hope to work with you in the months ahead to confirm qualified nominees of sound judgment to the senior personnel vacancies at the State Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez." The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert Menendez
Ranking Member