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One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

August 20, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

I write to follow-up on my ongoing concern regarding the Department's management of crucial State Department fellowships: Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program, Foreign Affairs Information Technology Fellowship (FAIT), William D. Clarke Sr. Diplomatic Security Fellowship, Donald M. Payne International Development Fellowship, and Veterans Innovation Partnership Fellowship (VIP).

Alarming, the Department has, to date, failed to resume accepting new cohorts of Fellows and has failed to provide the necessary guidance for future fellowship awards. This means that there will not be an incoming cohort entering school this fall, for at least the Pickering, Rangel, and FAIT fellowship programs. This disruption is deeply problematic considering the bipartisan and bicameral support expressed by Congress for such fellowships less than a year ago, including through the passage of key provisions in the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 119-60).¹ Additionally, you still have failed to respond to my letter from December 24, 2025, requesting information regarding fellowships and the personnel who manage them.

¹ P.L. 119-60 Sections 5133, 5134, and 5135, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-119publ60/pdf/PLAW-119publ60.pdf>

On multiple occasions, both in public hearings and private meetings, senior State Department officials have pledged that the Department remains committed to following the law and placing incoming fellowship classes into the Department pipeline and into academic programs. They also have testified that there has been an ongoing review of multiple State Department fellowship programs. In response to my questioning on March 5, 2026, Sarah McKemey, the Senior Bureau Official and Acting Chief Human Capital Officer in the Bureau of Human Resources testified, “We have been reviewing the pipelines, but the Department intends to uphold all of our contractual obligations...” She added, “we are looking at all of the fellowships that we are mandatorily required and we will continue to onboard them through the pipeline.”² However, I remain deeply concerned that on this issue – as with many others – the Department’s words and actions are not aligned.

We understand that Secretary Rubio has personally communicated to employees that these fellowship programs are important to attract top talent to the Department and that nothing in his Department reorganization runs contrary to such programs continuing. So I welcome the Department’s transparency in demonstrating how it is ensuring that critical, congressionally authorized fellowship programs will continue as key pipelines for the Department’s workforce. In addition to my original questions from December, I respectfully ask that you provide answers to the following questions by September 4th.

1. Does the Department plan to process fellowship applications for the 2026 academic year? If so, for which fellowship programs specifically and what is the status of this process? What has been the cause of any relevant delays?
2. What is the Department’s current plan and timeline for resuming Department fellowships that had been paused?
3. Please provide details about the scope and mission of the Department’s review of its fellowships, findings of any metric- and mission-specific outcomes of this review, and a list of all changes made to fellowship programs as a result of reviews.
4. Please provide a list of academic institutions with which you are working to implement State Department fellowship programs for upcoming academic years, including 2026-2027.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing: “Merit, Accountability, and Performance at State: Evaluating Promotion and Placement,” March 5, 2026, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/merit-accountability-and-performance-at-state-evaluating-promotion-and-placement>.

At a moment of great global instability around the world, we need the best and brightest representing the United States. Yet, the Department is failing to adhere to laws to bring in the next generation of employees. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gregory W. Meeks". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "G" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

GREGORY W. MEEKS
Ranking Member