



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 15 2014

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

Thank you for your letter of April 29 regarding the Department's recent solicitation for Congressional training. The issue of State Department contract management and oversight is of serious importance to us. Please be assured that we are working assiduously and carefully to implement all regulatory guidelines as effectively as possible.

On the related matter of the training mentioned in your letter, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is the training bureau of the Department of State, and provides training and professional development on a full range of topics. FSI has offered *Communicating with Congress* for 10 years for mid-level and senior staff; this is similar to other training the Department provides to better understand and interact with key partners, and includes *Working with the Domestic Media*, *Intelligence and Foreign Policy*, *Political-Military Affairs*, and *Commercial Tradecraft*.

It is an important responsibility for the Department to keep Congress informed, as our oversight body. To ensure our employees fulfill that professional duty, we believe it is valuable to give them training on how to meet that responsibility. This training provides an overview of our Committees and guidance on testimony preparation and delivery. The course provides basic skills and knowledge such as written versus oral statements, the typical flow of a hearing, and communication dynamics. The course attendees are more experienced staff, such as Office Directors, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Senior Advisors, and Senior Program Analysts, from a variety of offices. They are at a point in their careers where they may need to testify, or are involved in writing testimony, and are seeking training on writing and public speaking in the formal Congressional setting.

The Honorable

Claire McCaskill, Chairwoman,

Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight,

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs,

United States Senate.

A contract (SFSIAQ04C3020) was awarded to TheCapitol.Net, Inc. in 2004, and expired in 2009. A broader contract (SFSIAQ10A3012) covering a range of leadership and management training courses, including *Communicating with Congress*, was awarded to multiple vendors in 2009 and expires later this year. TheCapitol.Net, Inc. was again the vendor selected to provide *Communicating with Congress*. The latter contract is now being re-competed under solicitation number SFSIAQ14Q3002. Although the solicitation references spouses of ambassadorial candidates participating in some individual sessions of the *Ambassadorial Seminar*, we do not include spouses in sessions on working with Congress. Documents regarding the successful bidder from the 2004 and 2009 contracts are now under review and will be forwarded to you separately as soon as that review is completed. Proposals for firms that were not selected were destroyed after 1 year. The proposals submitted for the current solicitation are under technical review, are procurement sensitive, and cannot be provided at this time.

With regard to the role of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, the Bureau coordinates legislative activity within the Department, manages Congressional testimonies, liaises with Congress, facilitates Congressional travel, reviews proposed legislation affecting foreign policy, and advises individual bureaus and offices on legislative and outreach strategies and coordinates those strategies with the Secretary of State's priorities. As do most bureaus within the Department, the Bureau of Legislative Affairs relies on FSI, as the Department's training bureau, to deliver formal training for Department officials.

We hope that you find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julia Frifield
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Senator - State Department employees provide about 1,000 briefings a year to Congress. Training will help make these more effective. Happy to work with you on this issue