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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

RICHARD J. KESSLER, STAFF DIRECTOR
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April 29, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As part of the Subcommittee's ongoing oversight of State Department contracts, I am writing to request information and documents regarding the Department's recent solicitation for "Congressional Training."¹ According to the solicitation and a recent article in *The Washington Post*, the contract would provide "interactive, professional training seminars for senior-level officials on effective congressional testimony and briefing skills."²

As you are aware, I recently wrote to the Department to reiterate my longstanding concerns regarding the Department's contract management and oversight, citing a recent report by the State Department Inspector General finding "significant vulnerabilities" with the Department's contract management which put contracts totaling \$6 billion at risk of waste, fraud, and abuse.³ In light of these failures, I question the Department's decision to award a new contract to manage its communications with Congress, rather than focusing its time and attention on fixing its underlying problems.

I also question whether the award of this contract represents an efficient and effective use of the Department's resources, given that the requirements of the contract duplicate functions that are already performed by Department employees. The Department has a Bureau of Legislative Affairs, which "facilitates effective communication between State Department officials and the Members of Congress and their staffs ..., organizes member and staff briefings, [and] advises individual Bureaus of the

¹ Solicitation/Contract/Order for Commercial Items Number SFSIAQ14Q3002 (March 13, 2014) (online at https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=ef683042baea7eacba08627a52773d1b&tab=core&_cvview=1) (accessed April 29, 2014).

² *Bundler to Ambassador 101?*, *The Washington Post* (April 11, 2014) (online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/in-the-loop/wp/2014/04/11/bundler-to-ambassador-101/>) (accessed April 29, 2014).

³ Letter from Chairman Claire McCaskill to State Department Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy (April 9, 2014).

Department on legislative and outreach strategies.”⁴ These duties appear to encompass providing training to senior-level officials.

To assist the Subcommittee in its oversight, I request that you provide the following information and documents:

- (1) A list of all State Department contracts or solicitations for Congressional training services, to include Solicitation Number SFSIAQ14Q3002;
- (2) All quotes, bids, proposals and other responses submitted by contractors to the above list;
- (3) The State Department office that proposed this training;
- (4) The reason the State Department Bureau of Legislative Affairs cannot provide the services required;
- (5) The reason that not only ambassadors-designate but their spouses are to receive training;
- (6) For each position that may receive Congressional training, a list of the job qualifications to hold such a position.

I also request that you provide a briefing to Subcommittee staff by the office that proposed this training. I request that you provide this information and briefing as soon as possible, but no later than **Friday, May 16, 2014**.

The jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight is set forth in Senate Rule XXV clause 1(k); Senate Resolution 445 section 101 (108th Congress); and Senate Resolution 64 (113th Congress).

I appreciate your assistance. Please contact Jackson Eaton with the Subcommittee at (202) 224-6579 with any questions. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to Kelsey_Stroud@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight

cc: Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight

⁴ *Bureau of Legislative Affairs*, Department of State (online at www.state.gov/s/h) (accessed April 29, 2014).