



May 14, 2018

The Honorable Marie Royce
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ms. Royce:

We write to share our views on the impact of the appropriations directive related to the Exchange Visitor Programs. The State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill Sec. 7034(d)(5) was adopted as part of the omnibus spending bill and signed into law by the President on March 23, 2018 (Public Law 115-141).

The directive contains specific requirements that Exchange Visitor Programs must remain the same as enacted by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and implemented through regulations, as published up until the omnibus was enacted, unless the U.S. Department of State goes through a transparent, formal rulemaking process, actively consults with Congress, and conducts and reports publicly on the impact of any modification on our public diplomacy goals and our economy.

In our view, the requirements under the directive apply to every regulatory action – whether proposed or final – being considered by the Department this fiscal year. This would include any changes to the proposed Summer Work Travel regulation (NPRM published on January 12, 2017) and the Exchange Visitor Program General Provisions (final rule with comment period published October 6, 2014). The transparency requirements also apply to any rules contemplated by the Department, as published in the Federal Regulatory Agenda, such as rules governing the Au Pair, Camp Counselor, Intern and Trainee exchange programs. Additionally, the directive covers all other actions, including administrative and informal, by the Administration that might modify these programs this year.

As a partner with the Department to create rich cultural experiences for young people from around the world, we see any report on the public diplomacy and economic value of these programs as an opportunity to highlight their importance for expanding America's people-to-people interactions at no cost to U.S. taxpayers. Over 300,000 Exchange Visitors each year see America through their own eyes, improving their views of American businesses and people. The benefit to U.S. communities is significant as well – a study conducted by EurekaFacts validated that Summer Work Travel participants contributed \$509 million to the U.S. economy in 2016.



We applaud the Bureau's considerable efforts over the many years to make the Exchange Visitor Programs a success, as strengthening the program is our mutual goal. We believe the required processes under the appropriations directive will enable the executive and legislative branches to work with the international exchange community in strengthening what is a vital public diplomacy tool.

We look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ilir Zherka", is written in a cursive style.

Ilir Zherka
Executive Director