



# **Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen**

## *House Committee on Appropriations*

**Department of State - FY 2018 Budget Hearing**

**Secretary Rex Tillerson**

**June 14, 2017**

**Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time and I also want to welcome Secretary Rex Tillerson to the Appropriations Committee once again. We look forward to your testimony and hearing your frank and candid views on the many issues.

Today's hearing is an important part of the oversight duties of this Committee. Now that we have formally received the Administration's budget request, the Committee will undertake a thorough analysis. We will go through each and every budget line, question every witness and demand credible spending justifications and only then will we make our own determinations on the best use of tax dollars. After all, the "power of the purse" lies in this building - it is the Constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

We intend to put forward a complete set of appropriations bills that adequately fund important programs while working to reduce and eliminate waste and duplication.

I'll work with the Ranking Member, Mrs. Lowey, to move rapidly in the coming weeks and months to complete the fiscal year 2018 appropriations bills.

Secretary Tillerson, there are many important programs funded in this part of the budget that support our national security and our ability to influence events in the world. I have heard from many members that the State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way. General James Mattis – as commander of CENTCOM in 2013, famously said "If you don't fully fund the State Department, then I need to buy more ammunition."

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to see that this budget is focused on the campaign to defeat ISIS, al Qaeda and other terrorist groups that pose a threat our country and allies.

And I'm also pleased to see continued strong support for Israel.

However, many of my colleagues are concerned that the magnitude of the cuts to State Department and USAID programs that the President has put forward suggests that America is stepping back from its engagement in the world. Frankly, the world is a better place when the United States leads!

We know that events around the world impact the safety of Americans, American businesses and American jobs. Much of the work of the State Department and USAID enables our nation to shape these events in a manner that improves stability and defuses conflict. And our job as a Committee is to try and make the right kind of tradeoffs in a tight fiscal environment while keeping this in mind.

And while we're talking about safety and security, Mr. Secretary, I have to say that I was surprised by the depths of proposed cuts in this budget to Embassy security. In a world where our overseas diplomats, our facilities and our citizens pose a temptation for those who seek to do us harm or make a political statement or grab a headline, we must do everything we can to harden these targets from attack. I am very skeptical that a reduction of at least 19-percent can help us achieve these goals.

Once again, Mr. Secretary, today's hearing is part of a process that we follow to determine the best use of taxpayer dollars. After all, the power of the purse lies in this building - it is the constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

Secretary Tillerson, I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

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