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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520-0099

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I write today to inform you that your agency is the most recent recipient of my Golden Fleece Award. I am awarding the Golden Fleece to the U.S. Department of State (State) for needlessly delaying more than 1.6 million passport applications.

Your agency rightly issued important travel notifications due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the early part of this year, however, I believe that is unacceptable that State's Bureau of Consular Affairs suspended the processing of all passport applications. It's ridiculous there were other agencies in the federal government that continued to conduct non-COVID-19 related work remotely or with proper social distancing guidelines in the office and that State could not do the same.

According to a briefing conducted by Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Carl Risch, State began phase 1 of its resumption of passport processing on June 11, 2020. While I appreciate Assistant Secretary Risch's commitment to processing "about 200,000 per week"¹ I believe passport processing should have remained a non-COVID-19 priority of the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the size of this backlog could have been dramatically smaller if any at all had processing not been stopped.

Further, I have heard from numerous constituents over the past few weeks and months who were frustrated about a lack of communication from State on the status of their passport applications and when they can expect processing to be completed.

On a positive note, thank you for the Department's outstanding work and focus in getting Americans home who were stuck abroad at the outbreak of COVID-19. Should you require any additional authority from Congress to address these concerns I raised, I urge you to notify us as soon as possible. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

French Hill
Member of Congress

¹ "Briefing With Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Carl Risch On the Phased Resumption of U.S. Passport Services." June 12, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/briefing-with-assistant-secretary-for-consular-affairs-carl-risch-on-the-phased-resumption-of-u-s-passport-services/>