



February 2nd, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Mundon King,

I am writing to you as the President of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA). AFSA represents some 16,800 U.S. Foreign Service personnel serving overseas and in the United States from six U.S. Government agencies. We are both a professional association and the official bargaining representative for members of the U.S. Foreign Service. Our members include Foreign Service employees from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, APHIS, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

In this context, I am writing to urge your support for House Bill 518 (HB 518) sponsored by Delegate Paul E. Krizek, which would amend the Code of Virginia to extend tax exemptions on up to \$20,000 of Foreign Service retirement income over the next four years.

HB 518 would rectify one of the most significant financial burdens commonly cited by members of the Foreign Service upon retirement: taxation of their pensions.

In an ongoing effort to increase U.S. Foreign Service parity with the U.S. military on matters of taxation, the inclusion of retired Foreign Service members under the provisions of HB 518 will be an appropriate and welcome addition. Service in the United States Foreign Service is indeed analogous to service in the United States military; a key difference being that most of one's service takes place overseas. With that, U.S. Foreign Service members are often assigned to dangerous and difficult overseas assignments in support of U.S. national security.

This common-sense legislative update will rightfully enable retired members of the Foreign Service – diplomats, international development experts, and other patriotic professionals who protect the national security of the United States – to move closer to parity with retired members of the U.S. military.

In lieu of retiring abroad or elsewhere in the United States, this change would also attract more former members of the Foreign Service to retire in Virginia.

Thank you for your consideration to support HB 518 during the 2024 legislative session, and I hope this bill becomes state law as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Yazdgerdi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Yazdgerdi
President
American Foreign Service Association