

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 2nd, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We are writing in regard to the State Department’s refusal to respond to our June 30, 2022 letter inquiring about an April 2021 State Department Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) titled, “DRL FY20 IRF Promoting and Defending Religious Freedom Inclusive of Atheist, Humanist, Non-Practicing and Non-Affiliated Individuals.”¹

As recited in the letter, the NOFO announced a competitive process that would award grants of up to \$500,000 of congressionally appropriated, U.S. taxpayer-provided funds to organizations committed to the practice and spread of atheism and humanism, namely in South/Central Asia and in the Middle East/North Africa.

Although we asked the State Department to answer a series of questions no later than July 15, 2022, no responses have been provided thus far, suggesting either that the Department has chosen to disregard Secretary Blinken’s frequent, express instructions for its employees to work closely with Congress, or that it has something to hide. For your convenience, we have reattached the questions from the June 30 letter below:

1. After the April 2021 NOFO, which implementing partners were selected for the funding, if any? Please provide any contracts and sub-contracts signed with those partners.
2. What specific training programs and materials have the NGOs funded?
3. In which countries have these funds been utilized?

¹ <https://www.state.gov/statements-of-interest-requests-for-proposals-and-notices-of-funding-opportunity/drl-fy20-irf-promoting-and-defending-religious-freedom-inclusive-of-atheist-humanist-non-practicing-and-non-affiliated-individuals/> (noting that priority in funding will be given to programs that assist minorities and marginalized groups – “*particularly atheists and nonbelievers*” – to advocate with community and government leaders) (emphasis added). NOFO #SFP{pppp7977 in grants.gov (accessed June 27, 2022)

4. Did DRL have an official opinion letter from the Office of the Legal Advisor signing off on the constitutionality of the proposed grants? If so, was the opinion dated before the NOFO was published? If not, why not? Will the Department provide a copy of this legal opinion to Congress?
5. Did DRL consult with either Assistant Secretary for South Central Asia, the National Security Council, or with relevant local Ambassadors before embarking on a program to offer U.S.-funded promotion of atheism? If so, please summarize that consultation.
6. How does deconstructing America's reputation as a country of faith into one that promotes the negation of it improve our standing in the world?
7. How does promoting atheism in parts of the world where religious persecution is widespread² help those facing persecution?
8. How does promoting atheism in Muslim countries promote U.S. values and interests?
9. Why should Americans support the State Department in promoting a belief system the adherents of which remain a small minority in the United States?³
10. Does the State Department have plans to create grant programs to promote other individual religions and belief systems?
11. Why should it be part of the State Department's mission to promote radical woke organizations abroad?
12. Would you oppose a future administration flying a "Blue Lives Matter"⁴ or another flag with comparable cultural connotations at a U.S. Embassy?

Since we sent our letter, many of our constituents have reached out with concerns not only about the State Department's promotion of atheism, but also about its apparent promotion of "humanism"—an official belief system---as well as the State Department's promotion of other radical, divisive, and destructive cultural policies.

Americans deserve to know why the State Department is committed to spreading atheism abroad, and which foreign, anti-religious groups are receiving their tax dollars. To that end, please respond to the above list of 12 questions, no later than August 19th, 2022.

We would also like to request a phone briefing from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lisa Peterson to Republican Study Committee (RSC) members and staff as soon as possible to discuss our grave concerns with regard to this grant program.

In addition, it is imperative that you remind all employees and officials within the Department of their legal responsibility to take appropriate measures to collect, retain, and preserve all documents, communications, and other records in accordance with federal law, including the Federal Records Act and related regulations. This includes electronic messages involving official business that are sent using both official and personal accounts or devices, including records created using text messages, phone-based message applications, or encryption software. We

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/02/persecution-driving-christians-out-of-middle-east-report>

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/06/10-facts-about-atheists/>

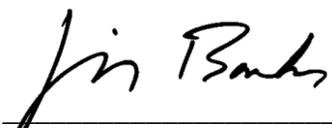
⁴ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/majority-of-likely-voters-want-blue-lives-matter-laws-punishing-attacks-on-police-poll>

request that you preserve all information that relates to this grant program -- “DRL FY20 IRF Promoting and Defending Religious Freedom Inclusive of Atheist, Humanist, Non-Practicing and Non-Affiliated Individuals” – including all information connected to oversight requests or demands from Congress, including but not limited to the questions asked in this letter and in our previous letter sent on June 30th, 2022.

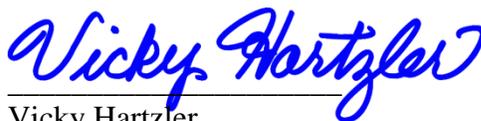
Specifically, this preservation request should be construed as an instruction to preserve all documents, communications, and other information, including electronic information and metadata, that is or may be potentially responsive to a future congressional inquiry, request, investigation, or subpoena. For purposes of this request, “preserve” means securing and maintaining the integrity of all relevant documents, communications, and other information, including electronic information and metadata, by taking reasonable steps to prevent the partial or full destruction, alteration, testing, deletion, shredding, incineration, wiping, relocation, migration, theft, mutation, or negligent or reckless handling that could render the information incomplete or inaccessible. This includes preserving all compilations of documents that have already been gathered in response to requests, even if copies of individual documents may still exist elsewhere in the agency.

Thank you for your assistance with this request for more information. We look forward to your prompt reply.

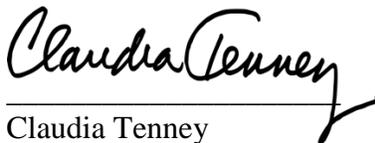
Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Member of Congress



Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



Ben Cline
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



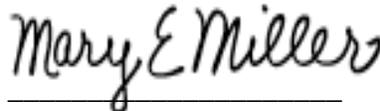
Bob Good
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Mary E. Miller
Member of Congress



Warren Davidson
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



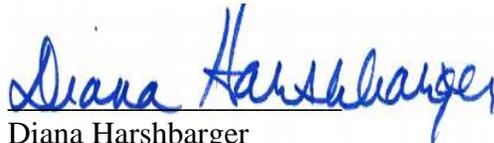
Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Barry Moore
Member of Congress



Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress



Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress