

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On July 14, 2023, I sent you a letter with respect to the employment of Fritz Berggren and the State Department's visa adjudication recusal protocol. Fritz Berggren has reportedly published antisemitic and racist content on his public website, and it's been reported that he was involved in the visa adjudication process at the State Department.¹ On October 26, 2023, nearly three months past the two-week deadline to respond and other than confirming Berggren's continued employment, the State Department failed to fully respond to the four questions posed in my letter:²

1. Is Fritz Berggren still employed at the State Department? If so, in what role, and what are his responsibilities? Provide all records relating to his role and responsibilities.³
2. Was Fritz Berggren required to recuse himself from any decision-making considering his reported public comments? If not, why not? If so, what was the scope of his recusal? Provide all records.
3. Was Fritz Berggren a visa application adjudicator? If so, provide the entire record of his approvals and denials. After the State Department became aware of his public comments, was he removed from the position?
4. How many visa application adjudicators have recused themselves in the assessment of a visa application in the last five years? Provide all records.

¹ Nahal Toosi, *U.S. Diplomat Openly Calls for Christian Nation-States, Rails Against Jews*, POLITICO, (Feb. 26, 2021), <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/26/diplomat-online-activity-blood-and-faith-471755>; Gabby Deutch, *U.S. Diplomat with Antisemitic Racist Blog 'Cannot Continue to Serve': Foreign Service Union President*, JEWISH INSIDER, (June 5, 2023), <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/06/foreign-service-union-fritz-berggren-eric-rubin-antisemitism-racism-blog/>.

² Letter from Naz Durakoglu, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, (Oct. 26, 2023), (on file with Comm. staff).

³ "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (regardless whether they resulted in final documents).

In the State Department's failed response, the Department claims that it "does not comment on personnel files or records."⁴ However, the State Department failed to describe the legal basis for which it asserted that position. Accordingly, please explain in detail the legal basis to withhold that information from the Congress.

In light of the State Department's failure to sufficiently respond to my questions, please fully answer all aforementioned questions and provide all relevant records no later than November 13, 2023.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Jace Pimentel of my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

⁴ Durakoglu, *supra* note 2.