

Written Testimony of Dave Panetti on HF1684

Greetings from Istanbul, Turkey -

I'm writing today to add testimony to that of my good friend and fellow Minnesotan, Bao Lee, who hails from Minnesota House District 66B. She and I are members of the United States Foreign Service, the diplomatic corps working in all corners of the globe on behalf of the American people.

In late February, I emailed my Minnesota State Senator and Representative (original email below) about the issue of renewing driver's licenses for members of the Foreign Service who are serving abroad. While the pandemic is on the wane, that does not ameliorate the problem of renewing a license while serving our country abroad.

I understand from my friend Bao that the House will have hearings today, May 5th, that will include this issue, and I would very much appreciate your support for adding the language to allow Minnesotans in the Foreign Service the opportunity to renew licenses and maintain our residence in our home state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dave Panetti

Foreign Service Officer
United States Department of State

Minnesota | Port-au-Prince, Haiti | Chisinau, Moldova | DC | Baghdad, Iraq | Istanbul, Turkey
952.200.8407

February 27, 2021
Greetings from Istanbul, Turkey.

I write to you today as my elected representatives (and that of a colleague of mine, Bao Lee who is from district 66B) in the Minnesota Legislature about an important issue for those of us who serve our country overseas.

As a member of the United States Foreign Service who has served abroad in four countries over ten years with the Department of State, maintaining my residency in Minnesota is a conscious choice for us. My wife and I grew up in Wisconsin but have lived in and maintained our residence in Minnesota since 1991, we raised our children there (our daughter now lives in St Paul in district 64A), my wife was a librarian for a county library system for 10 years, and I was a public high school teacher for nearly 20. Despite moving to Washington, DC for training and then repeatedly overseas for this career, we

deliberately maintain our official residency in the state of Minnesota because we want our tax dollars to go toward a well-managed state that uses those dollars for the greater good.

One element of maintaining our residency in Minnesota is obtaining and renewing a driver's license.

My understanding is that renewal by mail is not an option (more than one time) for members of the Foreign Service from Minnesota, despite the fact that this is an option for members of the armed forces who live and serve in other states and around the world. This would seem to be a simple fix for a problem that, while it may not affect many of us, does create obstacles for those of us who serve for years at a time in remote parts of the world, and who sometimes go for several years before having the ability to return home when we might follow the standard renewal process. Of course, returning home has been made particularly difficult, if not nearly impossible, during the pandemic.

Please support the effort to allow a similar exception to the rules for driver's license renewal for members of the Foreign Service as exists for members of the United States military. We serve in more places, often for longer periods and with less acknowledgement, than our military colleagues, and while we may not carry arms, we nonetheless often at risk when overseas serving our fellow citizens, and by making this small change you can help support those of us who make the choice to more easily maintain our residences in the great state of Minnesota.

Thank you.

Dave Panetti

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