

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to respectfully urge you to name a new nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Somalia. Somalia has gone without a U.S. ambassador since 1991; the decision to restore a diplomatic mission affirms our commitment to working with the Somali government to build a strong, stable, and prosperous Somalia. We respectfully urge you to act swiftly to assign a new nominee for the position.

After nearly two decades of violence and famine, Somalia is making steady progress towards stability. The election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in 2012 by a new federal parliament and the approval of a provisional constitution have allowed Somalia to reestablish central governance. Along with the assistance of the international community, Somalia has been able to make security gains against al-Shabaab. These are significant but fragile gains; recent horrific terrorist attacks in Mogadishu and Garissa, Kenya remind us that Somalia still faces enormous challenges.

Somalia's success hinges on continued diplomatic engagement, strengthened security and the commitment of international partners to promote stability through capacity building and economic development. A robust U.S.-Somalia diplomatic relationship is critical to sustaining and expanding the progress that that country has achieved thus far.

President Obama's nomination of the first U.S. ambassador to Somalia since 1991 earlier this year marks a new phase in our relationship with Somalia. Moving quickly to nominate another ambassador would further signal our strong commitment to Somalia.

The temporary closure of bank accounts of money service businesses in Kenya and the permanent closure of accounts in the U.S. illustrates the need to work with the Somali government and promote institutional development. The closure of these bank accounts

has made it difficult for members of the Somali diaspora in the U.S. to send money back to their loved ones in Somalia and the closures in Kenya threatened NGOs operating in the Horn of Africa. Remittances from the U.S. and abroad account for 25 to 40 percent of Somalia's economy; cutting off the remittance pipeline increases the vulnerability of Somalis who rely on this money and can create a humanitarian crisis that will surely jeopardize security gains.

We strongly believe that an active American ambassador to Somalia can contribute to U.S. efforts to improve the flow of remittances through legal and transparent channels. The State Department, in cooperation with the Treasury Department, can work with the Somali government to implement creative solutions to this problem and collaborate in laying the foundations of a transparent and accountable financial system that can be part of the global economy in the future.

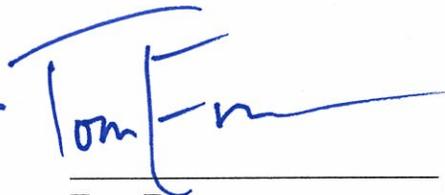
Somalia is at a critical moment and in desperate need of meaningful support and assistance to bolster stability in the country and throughout the region. Naming a new nominee as soon as possible would signal deep commitment and a new phase of collaboration between the U.S. and Somalia. We respectfully urge you to consider naming a new nominee for Ambassador to Somalia in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

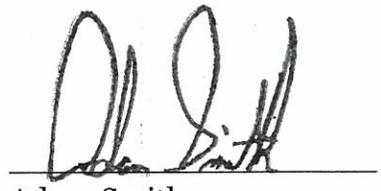
Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Senator Sherrod Brown



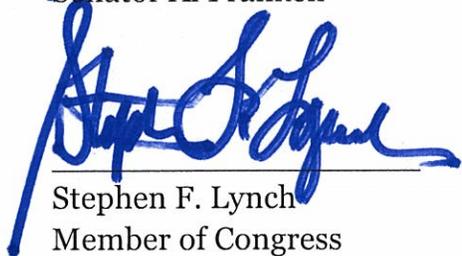
Senator Al Franken



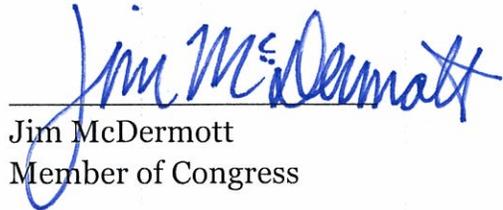
Senator Amy Klobuchar



Erik Paulsen
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress