

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2018

Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our interest in transforming the United States-Armenia Joint Economic Task Force (USATF) into a platform for sustained strategic dialogue on the direction of our nation's increasingly impactful bilateral partnership with Armenia, based upon our shared interests, common values, and the enduring friendship between the American and Armenian peoples.

In the wake of Armenia's recent political transition, capped by this past week's free and fair Parliamentary elections, Armenia has emerged as a model of democratic development, far outperforming many other states in the post-Soviet space and setting an international standard for the peaceful, civil society-driven, constitutional transfer of power. We were, of course, encouraged by the welcome of these remarkable developments by the White House and Department of State. While the credit for this progress belongs to the Armenian people, we can be proud of our role as Americans, over the past two decades, in appropriating and administering aid to help provide the tools and create the conditions for engaged citizens to take ownership of their future.

Now is the time to build off Armenia's democratic progress, taking our bilateral relations to the next level – in the political, economic, military, and cultural arenas. As a complement to the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council administered by the U.S. Trade Representative, the Task Force managed by our Department of State provides the perfect platform for setting the broad aims and policy objectives for our renewed and re-energized partnership – with a sharp focus on concrete bilateral initiatives that will drive short and mid-term progress on key deliverables and shared goals.

We respectfully encourage you to upgrade the next Task Force meeting to a strategic dialogue that supports the sustained escalation and regularization of high-level bilateral exchanges. In terms of democracy, we invite you to continue to expand U.S. support for anti-corruption, a strong civil society, and the independence of the media by creating working groups or mechanisms to advance reforms. This will leverage Armenia's real progress in these areas and the commitment made by the Administration to two years of additional democracy funding. Support for a comprehensive democratic transition will secure needed progress in the economic realm, where we encourage you to prioritize a long overdue Tax Treaty, Social Security Agreement, expanding duty-free products, Debt-for-Forestation swaps, non-stop LAX to EVN flights, trade missions, and other related initiatives. We also hope you will take into account that

Armenia suffers from a double blockade that deeply affects its economy. On the humanitarian front, we ask you to empower Armenia to continue serving as a safe haven for regional refugees, particularly at-risk ethnic and religious minorities. Finally, building upon Armenia's participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace and U.S.-lead global peacekeeping operations, we ask that you put in place policies and programs to broaden and deepen U.S.-Armenia military cooperation.

As you prepare for the next annual convening of the USATF in Washington, we request details on your priorities for engagement and your thoughts on exploring the expansion of existing bilateral cooperation frameworks with Armenia. We appreciate your attention to our recommendations detailed here, look forward to your response, and stand ready to help further the growth of the U.S.-Armenia relationship.

Sincerely,



JACKIE SPEIER

Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair



DAVID TROTT

Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair



FRANK PALLONE, JR.

Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair



DAVID G. VALADAO

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ADAM B. SCHIFF

Congressional Armenian Caucus Vice-Chair



GUS M. BILIRAKIS

Congressional Armenian Caucus Vice-Chair

CC:

Hon. Robert Lighthizer, United States Trade Representative

Dr. A. Wess Mitchell, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Hon. Brock Bierman, Assistant Administrator, USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia