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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

Benefits for Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Foreign Service Employees

While a career in the Foreign Service is rewarding, the demands to serve our country require great commitment and sacrifice by Foreign Service employees and their families. As in American society, our Foreign Service families come in different configurations; all are part of the common fabric of our Post communities abroad. Family members often uproot their lives, endure hardship conditions, and put their own careers on hold to support our overseas missions. The Department of State acknowledges these vital contributions by providing certain family members with benefits, training, and allowances.

The same has not been true for domestic partners of Foreign Service employees. While these partners support the work of our overseas posts, they are not granted benefits and allowances provided for other family members. Domestic partners of federal employees have for too long been treated unequally. As one of my first acts as Secretary, I directed the Department to review whether we had the flexibility to extend additional benefits to domestic partners.

Yesterday, the President issued a memorandum reflecting his commitment to ensuring that same-sex domestic partners receive the maximum benefits that each agency legally can undertake. I am pleased to announce that the Department of State is extending the full range of legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of members of the Foreign Service sent to serve abroad.

Changing our policy to provide training, medical care and other benefits to same-sex domestic partners will promote the cohesiveness, safety and effectiveness of our posts abroad. It will help the Department attract and retain personnel in a competitive environment where domestic partner benefits and allowances are increasingly the norm for world-class employers. This change is the right thing to do, and it is the smart thing to do.

We will implement this policy by changing our Foreign Affairs Manual and the Standardized Regulations to allow the same-sex domestic partners of the Department's Foreign Service employees to qualify as family members for a variety of benefits and allowances. Where appropriate, this extension of benefits and allowances will apply to the children of same-sex domestic partners as well. To qualify for these benefits and allowances on behalf of a same-sex domestic partner, an employee must file an affidavit identifying his or her same-sex domestic partner and certifying to certain eligibility requirements that will be set forth in the FAM.

The Department of State intends to provide the following additional benefits and allowances for declared same-sex domestic partners of eligible employees serving overseas:

- Diplomatic passports,
- Inclusion on employee travel orders to and from posts abroad,
- Shipment of household effects,
- Inclusion in family size calculations for the purpose of making housing allocations,
- Family member preference for employment at posts abroad,
- Use of medical facilities at posts abroad,
- Medical evacuation from posts abroad,
- Emergency travel for partners to visit gravely ill or injured employees and relatives,
- Inclusion as family members for emergency evacuation from posts abroad,
- Subsistence payments related to emergency evacuation from posts abroad,
- Inclusion in calculations of payments of overseas allowances (e.g., payment for quarters, cost of living, and other allowances),
- Representation expenses, and
- Training at the Foreign Service Institute.

The Department also will work with foreign governments to provide same-sex domestic partners, to the extent possible, with diplomatic visas, privileges and immunities, and authorization to work in the local economy.

We look forward to implementing these changes.

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