



March 12th, 2024

Dear Representative Matt Norris,

I am writing to you as the President of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA). AFSA represents some 16,800 U.S. Foreign Service personnel serving overseas and in the United States from six U.S. Government agencies. We are both a professional association and the official bargaining representative for members of the U.S. Foreign Service. Our members include Foreign Service employees from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, APHIS, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

In this context, I am writing to urge the Minnesota House Committee on Taxes support for House File 3327 (HF 3327), Authored by Representative Matt Norris and Co-Authored by Representatives Newton, Engen, and Bakeberg, which would amend the Code of Minnesota to extend tax exemptions on Foreign Service retirement income in line with that already being granted to military retirees.

HF 3327 would rectify one of the most significant financial burdens commonly cited by members of the Foreign Service upon retirement: taxation of their pensions.

In an ongoing effort to increase U.S. Foreign Service parity with the U.S. military on matters of taxation, the inclusion of retired Foreign Service members under the provisions of HF 3327 will be an appropriate and welcome addition. Service in the United States Foreign Service is indeed analogous to service in the United States military; a key difference being that most of one's service takes place overseas. With that, U.S. Foreign Service members are often assigned to dangerous and difficult overseas assignments in support of U.S. national security.

This common-sense legislative update will rightfully enable retired members of the Foreign Service – diplomats, international development experts, and other patriotic professionals who protect the national security of the United States – to move closer to parity with retired members of the U.S. military.

In lieu of retiring abroad or elsewhere in the United States, this change would also attract more former members of the Foreign Service to retire in Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration to support HF 3327 during the 2024 legislative session, and I hope this bill becomes state law as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Yazdgerdi". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Yazdgerdi
President
American Foreign Service Association

Cc: Members of the Minnesota House Committee on Taxes
Representative Aisha Gomez (Chair)
Representative Matt Norris (Vice Chair)
Representative Greg Davids (Republican Lead)
Representative Esther Agbaje
Representative Patti Anderson
Representative Jeff Brand
Representative Steve Elkins
Representative Michael Howard
Representative Jim Joy
Representative Jon Koznick
Representative Liz Lee
Representative Dave Lislegard
Representative Bjorn Olson
Representative Liz Olson
Representative Dave Pinto
Representative Kristin Robbins
Representative Andy Smith
Representative Chris Swedzinski
Representative Mike Wiener
Representative Jeff Witte
Representative Cheryl Youakim