



H.R. 6456 – TO PROVIDE FOR EXTENSIONS OF CERTAIN AUTHORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6456 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Howard Berman (D-CA) on July 10, 2008. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.R. 6456 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on July 30, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6456 extends the authority of the State Department, until 2009, to hire retired Foreign Services officers to staff difficult posts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to help curb visa and passport backlogs in the U.S. Additionally, the bill makes clear that the State Department has the authority to pay the subsistence expenses of special agents serving on protective details, and that this authority extends to expenses made outside of the agent's duty station.

The bill extends to 2009 the Broadcasting Board of Governor's authority to hire a limited number of temporary contractors to meet "surge" broadcasting needs in the International Broadcasting Bureau and the Voice of America. The bill also extends the operational authority for 'Radio Free Asia' (RFA) through 2010.

Additionally, the bill incorporates the text of H.R. 3658, which allows U.S. Foreign Service Officers to take their rest and recuperation travel in U.S. territories.

Note: H.R. 3658, which was introduced by Rep. Luis Fortuno (R-PR) on September 25, 2007, passed the House by a vote of 416-0, on May 6, 2008. [Link to Legislative Digest for H.R. 3658](#)

BACKGROUND

The State Department currently possesses authority to hire a limited number of retired foreign service officers who are already trained and experienced, in order to help rectify backlogs in the issuance of passports for American citizens and the issuance of U.S. visas, and to help staff positions in the U.S. diplomatic posts in Iraq and Afghanistan that have proven exceptionally hard to fill due to the various strains on State's personnel structure.

Current law covering the State Departments ability to pay certain expenses of special agents assigned to protective details does not explicitly state whether the Department may cover an agent's subsistence expenses, such as for a hotel room.

According to the RFA website, the purpose of the RFA is to provide a news source to Asian countries whose government policies prohibit access to free press. It is broadcast in nine languages across China, Tibet, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma. RFA is a privately owned non-profit corporation founded in 1996 under provisions contained in the 1994 International Broadcasting Act (P.L. 103-236). Currently, many RFA contracts operate on two year terms and H.R. 6456 accommodates these terms.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office did not have a cost estimate available for H.R. 6456 as of July 29, 2008.

STAFF CONTACT

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