

Statement of Senator Charles E. Grassley  
Before the United States Senate  
August 4, 2015

Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent request at the present time relating to the nomination of David Malcolm Robinson to be Assistant Secretary for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

I will object because the State Department has engaged in unreasonable delay in responding to Judiciary Committee investigations and inquiries. Since June of 2013, the Judiciary Committee has requested a number of documents related to an investigation into Ms. Huma Abedin regarding her possible conflicts of interest created by her simultaneous employment with the State Department and private sector entities. In addition, the Judiciary Committee has inquired about former Secretary Clinton and Ms. Abedin's questionable email practices that may be in violation of department policy and federal law. Furthermore, the Committee's inquiry also centers on the possible interference of Freedom of Information Act requests by State Department personnel, including Secretary Clinton's former Chief of Staff, Ms. Cheryl Mills. To this day, the Committee has not received a complete response. Moreover, the Committee recently acquired information that shows the State Department has been in possession of material that would answer some of the Committee's inquiries. Yet, the requested material is still not forthcoming.

This willful lack of cooperation is made more evident by the example of repeated failures by State Department personnel to respond to emails or respond days or weeks later. And in yet another recent Committee investigation beginning in June 2015, the State Department has still failed to provide any communication, via email or a phone call, to acknowledge or confirm that they have received a Committee letter, despite three emails sent by Committee staff.

Not only has the Judiciary Committee experienced unacceptable delays in receiving information, other entities inside and outside of the government have experienced delays as well. The Associated Press sued the State Department over the failure to satisfy repeated document requests under the Freedom of Information Act related to these same issues. One of these requests dates back five years ago. Judge Richard Leon of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, the judge responsible for this case, chided the State Department for its failure to produce documents on time, "Now, any person should be able to review that in one day — one day. Even the least ambitious bureaucrat could do this."

In total, these actions illustrate a pattern of conduct that clearly demonstrates a lack of cooperation and bad faith in its interaction with Congress. This is unacceptable and cannot continue.

In order to maintain the proper balance of separation of powers and in order for Congress to exercise its proper oversight function, government agencies must respond to inquiries. The State Department apparently believes that it can simply ignore Congress. It is important to note that my objection is not intended to question Mr. Robinson's credentials in any way. However, withholding consent to suspend Senate rules on nominations is one tool a Senator has to

incentivize executive agencies to respond to congressional inquiries. Frankly, this should not be necessary, and the nominee is an innocent victim of the State Department's contemptuous failures to respond to Congressional inquiries. I urge the State Department to change its ways and if they choose not to, I will be forced to escalate the scope of my intent to object to include unanimous consent requests relating to Foreign Service Officer candidates as well.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "C" and "G".