

RELEASE IN FULL

From: McHale, Judith A <McHaleJA@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 1, 2011 9:14 PM
To: H
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Barbara Mikulski

I met with Barbara this afternoon and she mentioned that she would be seeing you tomorrow.

I gave her an update on all the things we have been working on. She wanted to know more about what we are doing with social media and also wanted more information about our youth oriented programming. Also asked if any of us had any sense, prior to the uprising in Tunisia that things were about to erupt throughout the Middle East. I pointed out that you had addressed these issues with governments throughout the region and in your speech in Qatar. I also told her we were working very aggressively to roll out more programs focused on young people and that I am working with INR to refine our research to have more of a "consumer" focus.

She also asked if we are doing anything to tighten our regulations of the summer work programs. I've included some info below in case this comes up tomorrow.

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Summary Information on SWT and Secondary School Exchange Oversight

Summer Work Travel Program

Over the past 47 years, the J-1 visa Summer Work Travel (SWT) program has provided millions of foreign college and university students the opportunity to visit the United States and experience first-hand U.S. culture and society through travel and temporary work. The program's popularity arises from its participants' ability to enjoy a true cultural exchange experience, while underwriting its cost through employment in the United States. This year, the SWT will bring approximately 110,000 foreign university students to the United States for temporary work during their summer recess. The SWT program is operated by 53 private sector corporations, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions designated by the Department of State. The program operates without appropriated funds.

The Department has identified several areas where the program management and oversight need to be strengthened. We have reports that some program participants have been involved in financial fraud and other criminal activities and have been working across the interagency and with the private sector to address these issues. The Department is working to put in place new regulations in place to better safeguard participants, hold U.S. sponsors and employers accountable for placement and oversight obligations, and ensure that all summer work travel participants and employers fully understand their rights and responsibilities.

SECONDARY SCHOOL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The State Department is committed to the safety and well-being of the 30,000 high school students who participate each year in the Exchange Visitor Program's secondary school exchanges, both private and U.S. government-funded. Given their youth, this is an especially vulnerable population and an extra level of vigilance is required. Since June 2009, the Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Bureau has taken a series of actions to strengthen the oversight and management of the State Department's Youth Programs. These actions address four key needs, including:

- **Enhanced Regulatory Oversight** - including new rules that implement stronger host family requirements.
- **Internal Restructuring of Youth Programs** - including the establishment of a new youth programs monitoring unit and using an enhanced clearinghouse database to track the information.
- **Greater Participant Outreach** - including the establishment of a *toll free number for students* to contact the Department directly--24 hours a day, 7 days a week--with any problems or concerns.
- **Intensive Sponsor Oversight** - establishing the testing and credentialing of volunteers and staff members and the need for password protected websites for placement of students.

The Department believes the actions we are undertaking will greatly enhance protection mechanisms to ensure that we and our designated sponsor organizations are adhering to "best practices" to provide these students with safe and rewarding experiences.