

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today to urge you to reaffirm the long-held principle that U.S. Ambassadors must not interfere in the domestic politics of their host countries.

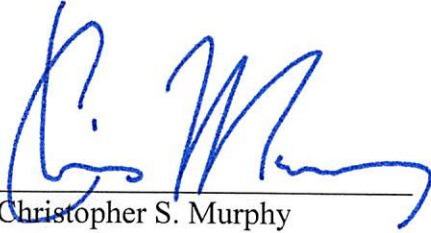
As you know, our U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Amb. Richard Grenell, recently told Breitbart London that he wants to “empower other conservatives throughout Europe” to rise up against what he calls “a very small elitist crowd.” He also referred to Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz – a vocal critic of German Chancellor Angela Merkel – as a “rock star” and invited him to lunch on June 13.

One of the fundamental tenets of diplomacy is remaining neutral with regard to the internal politics of a foreign country. Mr. Grenell’s remarks have sparked outrage in Germany, one of our strongest allies. On June 3, Mr. Grenell tweeted, “The idea that I’d endorse candidates/parties is absurd.” And yet, as you agreed during your testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 24, the way an interlocutor perceives a message is just as important as the way it was intended. Even if Mr. Grenell did not intend to give the impression that he was favoring one set of political actors over another, many in Germany and across Europe understandably perceived his comments as interfering in domestic politics.

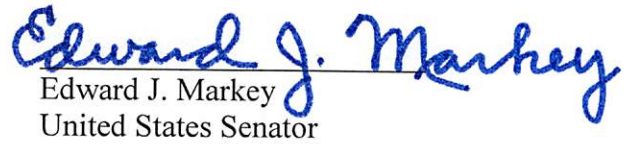
Remarks like this sow doubt and divisiveness at a time in which the United States needs the cooperation of our allies on a whole host of challenges. Securing Germany’s support will be crucial to the Administration’s effort to reimpose sanctions on Iran. We are also asking Germany to increase their defense spending as part of efforts to strengthen NATO, lead on Russia sanctions within the EU, block the NordStream II pipeline to weaken Russia’s energy monopoly, and send more troops to Afghanistan. These are not easy asks, and at a time when relations are already strained over the United States’ decision to impose tariffs and withdraw from the Iran deal, our Ambassador must be especially deft and diplomatic.

Many members of the Senate expressed concerns about Mr. Grenell’s long history of undiplomatic comments during his confirmation process, and he assured us he would stay out of politics once he became ambassador. We ask that you reaffirm this important principle for all diplomats representing the United States overseas.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



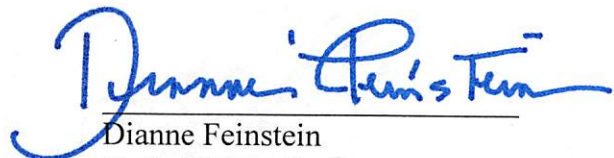
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



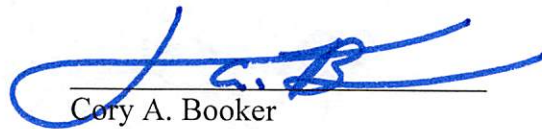
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator