

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20521

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write to strongly urge you to attend the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) meeting of foreign ministers next month. Earlier this week, State Department officials indicated that you did not plan to attend and would instead prioritize meetings with China and Russia. Now we understand you are looking to have NATO reschedule its ministerial to accommodate those other meetings.

We recognize that you were confirmed as Secretary of State only recently and are in the early stages of forming your policy management team, but we find this initial setting of priorities very troubling. The United States has long prioritized western democracies and transatlantic security. Although it is important that our country pursue beneficial relationships with China and Russia wherever appropriate, those meetings and negotiations should not come at the expense of our 67 year-old historic alliance. Nor should a meeting with Russian officials in Moscow occur before visiting Ukraine, in part to help fully appreciate the terrible cost the Russian-backed conflict has imposed.

Next month's NATO summit of foreign ministers will bring together all 28 NATO members and it could not occur at a more critical time. Our NATO allies have begun to question our commitment to the alliance, Russia is interfering in European elections, and Russia is threatening our NATO allies in the Baltics.

The United States has been the primary agenda setter at past meetings. Your absence at this meeting would not only be conspicuous, but it would send the wrong message to our allies and our adversaries. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has called NATO "the most successful military alliance certainly in modern world history, probably ever." Given the increasingly aggressive behavior by Russia in the region and abroad and particularly in the operation of our respective democratic institutions, we must prioritize and reaffirm our commitments to NATO, not ignore them.

We urge you to affirm your attendance at NATO's meeting of foreign ministers in order to reassure our allies that the United States' commitment to NATO remains "unwavering," as Vice

President Mike Pence recently characterized. It is more important now than ever that we stand shoulder to shoulder with our European allies and prioritize our attendance at the upcoming NATO ministerial.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Al Franken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end. A thin horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

Al Franken  
United States Senator