

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 12, 2018

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I am writing regarding the State Department's decision to honor my request that it create a process for collecting and analyzing the stories of approximately 140 U.S. citizens who have been involved in suspicious alcohol-related incidents in Mexico. I believe this is an important step and look forward to helping the State Department connect with impacted individuals in Wisconsin and across the country. Furthermore, I request that the State Department use the information contained in these stories to appropriately reform its consular affairs operations in Mexico and its relationships with Mexican partner organizations that do not share our interests.

I appreciate the State Department's agreeing to my request to create this process, which is essential to accurately understanding the threat to the health and safety of U.S. citizens posed by illicit alcohol in Mexico. As I understand the process, impacted U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City at [ACSMexicoCity@state.gov](mailto:ACSMexicoCity@state.gov), and their "reports should include the U.S. citizen's full name and date of birth, a factual account of events, and any relevant medical documentation or police and/or hotel reports, if applicable."<sup>1</sup> However, the State Department has been clear that the collected "information will be used solely to capture data for analysis by the Department and will NOT/NOT be used for law enforcement or investigative purposes, as the Department does not have legal jurisdiction to investigate claims in Mexico."<sup>2</sup>

While I understand that the State Department does not have legal jurisdiction to investigate specific cases, I am confident that a clear-eyed, comprehensive analysis of the information provided by victims will reveal systemic issues related to illicit alcohol, weak and corrupt law enforcement and judicial institutions, an absence of the rule of law, and an overall dangerous environment for U.S. citizens in Mexico. Accordingly, I request that you use this information and associated analysis to reform, as appropriate, U.S. consular affairs operations in Mexico, including the scope and posture of assistance provided to American citizens in distress.

Indeed, the fact that the State Department claims to have not yet received evidence substantiating alcohol-related allegations by U.S. citizens provides a compelling justification for consular personnel to take a more proactive, victim-centric approach. The State Department should assist U.S. citizen victims gather such evidence and navigate an ineffective foreign legal system, not merely provide limited guidance and essentially let them fend for themselves. Furthermore, I request that the State Department reform and, if warranted, cease, its reliance on and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. State Department email to Office of Senator Tammy Baldwin staff (January 11, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

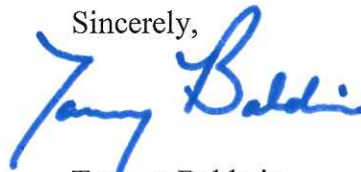
relationships with those Mexican partner organizations that do not share our interests. I am extremely concerned that the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City routinely refers U.S. citizen victims to a broken Mexican legal system that has historically failed to provide justice. While I recognize that this is a complex legal and policy issue, the State Department must do more to protect and assist our citizens when abroad.

I also request that all reports received by the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City are shared with the State Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG), which is conducting an inquiry into the State Department's response to incidents involving potentially tainted alcohol and is copied on this letter. These reports are directly material to the OIG inquiry.

Unfortunately, the issue of illicit alcohol in Mexico is not going away, and U.S. citizens continue to be victimized. Making matters worse, this is just one thread in the larger web of Mexico's degrading security, governance, and human rights climate. Given Mexico's demonstrated inability to provide a safe environment for our citizens, it is clear that the usual playbook for managing the U.S.-Mexico relationship, including for U.S. consular affairs operations, is not working. I strongly encourage you to read the story of Abbey and Austin Conner, of which I have written you previously, as well as the forthcoming reports. After you do, I believe that you will agree that the U.S. government must do better for its citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of my requests.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Steve A. Linick, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State