January 8, 2014

The Honorable Congresswoman Kay Granger
U.S. Congress
1026 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Inclusion of Consular Notification in Omnibus Appropriations Bill

Dear Congresswoman Granger,

American Citizens Abroad, ACA, Inc. the premier organization representing the interests of the 7 million Americans living overseas, urgently requests that you work with Senator Leahy to ensure that the consular notification compliance provision (§ 7083) is included in the final “Foreign Ops” portion of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill.

Inclusion of the notification compliance provision is a key element in demonstrating strong U.S. support for the objectives embodied in the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (“the Convention”), an agreement of capital importance for ensuring respect for the legal rights of all citizens living outside their country or origin.

American citizens living overseas who are subject to arrest for any reason should expect that the authorities in the country of residence will immediately contact U.S. consular officials in order to ensure decent, fair and equitable treatment under the laws of the foreign country. Failure on the part of U.S. authorities to demonstrate observance of the Convention’s provisions subjects Americans living or traveling abroad to an unacceptable and unnecessary level of legal jeopardy. To the extent American authorities fail to apply the letter and spirit of the Convention, American consular authorities cannot plausibly and credibly insist that the authorities in the arresting country observe Convention norms with
respect to American nationals. Reciprocity and comity are the cornerstones of the international legal system, and it is of vital importance that Americans detained overseas possess the right to avail themselves of the protections afforded under the Vienna Convention.

We look forward to your firm and steadfast defense of the rights of our compatriots overseas and stand ready to provide you with any further information or assistance you may require concerning this important issue.

Best,

Marylouise Serrato
Executive Director ACA
202 322 8441

cc: Congressman Robert Goodlatte – Chair of the House Judiciary Committee