

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 16, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We urge you to promptly name a qualified individual to serve as the Ambassador of the United States to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ten ASEAN nations are home to more than 662 million people and have a combined GDP of \$3.2 trillion. By 2050, Southeast Asia is projected to become the world's fourth largest economy. The region's economic vibrancy, strategic location, and demographic diversity all make it a critical partner for the United States. Filling this important position—which has been vacant since January 2017—would enhance our ability to effectively work with ASEAN to further our shared interests in the region and beyond.

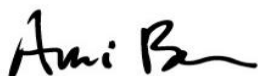
The United States has long supported ASEAN's central role to promoting prosperity, peace, and stability in the Indo-Pacific. As Members of Congress committed to advancing U.S. relationship with our Southeast Asian partners, we appreciate your Administration's continued prioritization of the region and the numerous high-level visits from U.S. officials since you took office. As your Administration continues to make progress on filling vacant ambassadorships, it is imperative that the United States harness the growing momentum in our relationship with Southeast Asia by naming an ambassador to ASEAN. Many of our most pressing challenges require solutions that draw on multilateral organizations like ASEAN. Naming an Ambassador will be crucial for our efforts to further cooperate with the group on our many shared priorities including countering COVID-19, strengthening trade and investment ties, enhancing regional security, and addressing environmental challenges.

In particular, the nomination and timely confirmation of a U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN is essential given the continued crisis in Burma. With the dry season on the horizon, we are deeply concerned the military junta will further escalate the violence in attempt to crush dissent and exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. We appreciate ASEAN's leadership on this pressing matter thus far and its decision to downgrade Burma's participation at the recent ASEAN Summit. Having a U.S. Ambassador to show continued support ASEAN's centrality and to engage ASEAN members as we work toward a durable political solution in Burma will be crucial moving forward.

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Southeast Asia is one of the most dynamic, fastest-growing regions in the world, and ASEAN continues to be a vital partner in our shared efforts to advance regional peace, stability, and prosperity. As the first non-ASEAN country to name an Ambassador to ASEAN in 2008, the United States benefits from robust cooperation with our ASEAN friends. A confirmed U.S. Ambassador to the region would further reaffirm U.S. commitment to the region and work with regional partners to advance our shared interests.

Sincerely,



Ami Bera, M.D.  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific,  
Central Asia, and Nonproliferation



Steve Chabot  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific,  
Central Asia, and Nonproliferation



Joaquin Castro  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Caucus on the  
Association of Southeast Asian Nations



Ann Wagner  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Caucus on the  
Association of Southeast Asian Nations