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**Record Group/Collection:** George H.W. Bush Presidential Records  
**Collection/Office of Origin:** Speechwriting, White House Office of  
**Series:** Grant, Mary Kate, Files  
**Subseries:** Subject File, 1988-1991

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**OA/ID Number:** 13883  
**Folder ID Number:** 13883-005

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**Folder Title:**  
Ray Patterson [Foreign Service], 12/9/88

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Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
<b>G</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

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# Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

## (George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
01. Letter	Ray Patterson to Mary Kate Grant, re: Foreign Service application process for blind people; personal information redacted. (1 pp.)	12/01/88	P-6, (b)(6)	

**Collection:**

**Record Group:** Bush Presidential Records  
**Office:** Speechwriting, White House Office of  
**Series:** Grant, Mary Kate  
**Subseries:** Subject File  
**WHORM Cat.:**  
**File Location:** Ray Patterson [Foreign Svc.] 12/9/88

<b>Date Closed:</b> 12/22/2004	<b>OA/ID Number:</b> 04425
<b>FOIA/SYS Case #:</b>	
<b>Re-review Case #:</b> 2005-0482-S	
<b>P-2/P-5 Review Case #:</b>	

<b>MR Case #:</b>	<b>Appeal Case #:</b>
<b>MR Disposition:</b>	<b>Appeal Disposition:</b>
<b>Disposition Date:</b>	<b>Disposition Date:</b>

### RESTRICTION CODES

**Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]**

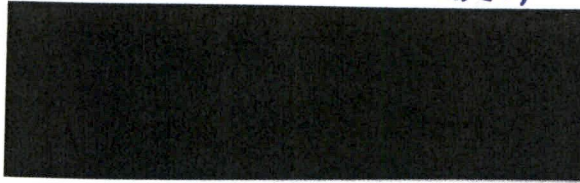
- P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P-5 Release would disclose confidential advise between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

**Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]**

- (b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

P-6,  
(b)(6)



Dear Mary,

Thank you for speaking with me about my problem. I think you sense what I am trying to say, and I hope you can help.

As of today it appears that I may be allowed to take the exam on December 6 using some technology that is totally unfamiliar to me. I am making this attempt, but it will not be a fair exam in my opinion because I had so little time to play under the new rules. I am not sure what recourse I will have, but I don't want this December 6 exam under these circumstances to be considered a "Reasonable" accommodation and I will not accept this as a complete compromise. I'm just giving it my best try under what they will allow me to do. I have found the Foreign Service ~~Examiners~~ board of Examiners directors very frank and relatively helpful considering the position they are required to take--dialog has been ongoing which is encouraging.

Since I spoke with you I have heard two interviews, one on radio and one on TV, with a man named Rabby who is totally blind and has passed both the written and oral exams and been not allowed on to the list. I spoke with Mr. Rabby, but I am not a member of his group, the NFB. I do not want to be linked to the NFB or any blind organization. I found Mr. Rabby's case very interesting in that since he had cleared the exam hurdles and been kept from the list, he should have proceeded in to the courts two or three years ago. I know nothing about him or his case, but it seems strange that he did not move on in to the courts. I mention this because he has appeared on Good Morning America and NPR and in the press, but hasn't attacked the problem. I want to go after the problem and not use the media until a while else has failed.

Ironically, I am trying to take an exam that I am not assured of being able to pass. Beyond my desire to get a job overseas, I think that there is a principle here worth fighting for. I have sent letters which may be on file with the State Department expressing my opinion that the policy of keeping the blind out of overseas positions is illegal and discriminatory, but that I wanted to find a way to gain an exemption to the rule rather than engage in a protracted court battle. That is still my position.

Thank you again for offering to help me. If the enclosed letter is deficient in any way, please let me know and I can rewrite it.

Sincerely yours,

Ray Patterson

# Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

## (George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
02. Letter	Ray Patterson to James Baker, re: Foreign Service application process for blind people; personal information redacted. (3 pp.)	11/30/88	P-6, (b)(6)	

**Collection:**

**Record Group:** Bush Presidential Records  
**Office:** Speechwriting, White House Office of  
**Series:** Grant, Mary Kate  
**Subseries:** Subject File  
**WHORM Cat.:**  
**File Location:** Ray Patterson [Foreign Svc.] 12/9/88

<p><b>Date Closed:</b> 12/22/2004  <b>FOIA/SYS Case #:</b>  <b>Re-review Case #:</b> 2005-0482-S  <b>P-2/P-5 Review Case #:</b></p>	<p><b>OA/ID Number:</b> 04425</p>
<p><b>MR Case #:</b>  <b>MR Disposition:</b>  <b>Disposition Date:</b></p>	<p><b>Appeal Case #:</b>  <b>Appeal Disposition:</b>  <b>Disposition Date:</b></p>

### RESTRICTION CODES

**Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]**

- P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
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- (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

Ray Patterson

P-6,  
(b)(6)

Secretary James Baker  
Office of the Presidential Transition  
1825 Connecticut NW  
Suite 1025  
Washington, D. C. 20270

Dear Secretary Baker:

My name is Ray Patterson. I am totally blind. I am writing to bring a problem to your attention and to request your assistance in attempting to find a solution.

The enclosed letter is the latest policy of the State Department and has implications beyond the matter of how the Foreign Service Exam is to be administered. I believe that the departure from past practice is giving blind people the opportunity to take the exam and possibly working in the Foreign Service is illegal and discriminatory. I think the exclusion of an entire minority group from consideration and the normal selection process sends a negative message that may not be the intent. In my biographical information that follows I believe that I can put forth a position that a case by case evaluation of blind people wishing to enter the foreign service would serve the best interests of all concerned.

I have taken the Foreign Service Exam three times. For those tests I was allowed to use a reader, braille, or cassette recording. I understand that this concession to the handicap is generally allowed in testing at the Federal and State level.

I have spoken with the author of a 1984 State Department report which may have been entitled Visually Impaired Persons in Foreign Service Officer Positions. It is germane because in that report information was accumulated and presented to show clearly and irrefutably that the blind can not work overseas. I began questioning that premise while simultaneously readying myself to take the Foreign Service Exam.

I now synthesize the situation as having two problems. First, the new policy appears to use the exam as a discriminatory device to keep blind people out of the State Department. It has been verbalized, though not yet put into writing, that the intent is to show that blind cannot hold jobs, therefore it is unnecessary to test them. On November 9, 1988, I received the enclosed letter which made it difficult and unreasonably hard to take the test. It states that I will not be allowed to use a reader, braille text, or a cassette recording. The new policy seems to discriminate against a whole group. I am not arguing for special treatment for myself, but rather for returning the

procedure to the longstanding practice of allowing the blind to take the exam. If that means that a reader, braille text, or cassette recording is necessary for taking the exam, then it should be allowed. Even as I write this, procedures for using other technology could allow the blind to take the test from original source documents. Second, the 1984 policy restricts the blind from overseas duty. The 1984 report substantiating why blind people cannot work overseas is an issue not easily put into black and white, but falls much more into a shades of gray argument. The problem is complex because the reasons given are based on sighted people's biases. Please bear with my explanation.

One example given for not allowing blind people into Consular Office positions is that the blind officer could not look at an applicant. This is true. A blind person cannot eyeball someone, however a blind person can ask questions, use their experiences and knowledge of the people in the country and make a determination. Now for putting these two evaluations side by side. The assumption holds that the visual evaluation is inherently superior. Much of the science of psychology is based on asking questions and getting answers, so the visual inspection is not necessarily superior to the nonvisual evaluation. It comes down to a case by case matter, but the inferred, almost unanimous feeling that the visual evaluation is always superior is difficult to refute — but not impossible.

Another often used reason to keep blind people from being posted overseas concerns the difficulty a blind person would have in living in a foreign country and transporting themselves around. Many sighted evaluators know how difficult it has been for themselves and amplify the problem when looking at a blind person. Blind defenders of their position hold that there is no problem. The middle ground, accurate position is that it is difficult, true, but no more difficult because of the blindness. Individual mobility skills can be considered, but an all encompassing generalization is inappropriate and serves to discriminate.

Although I have stated that I don't want special consideration and I am interested in seeing that the policy be reviewed, I would like to note that I have seen State Department literature which suggests that some attempts are made to recruit minorities and those with certain skills which would serve the interests of the State Department. I can envision situations in which a blind person could be recruited as an asset. I would like to reserve the possibility of presenting such a case in a future letter.

The State Department, through such reports as I have cited, has examples of blind people to support their position. Blind organizations have blind people to cite as refutation. I would like to put forth my own position and a bit of my history since I know my own case best.

I am forty and have been blind since age three. I graduated from Kansas State University in 1970 and became a counselor at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas in 1972. In 1975 I left for an around the world trip. From 1976 to 1980 I made many trips to and from such countries as Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

During this time I was conducting business, transporting myself, and living completely on my own. I was not a member of any group and had no traveling companions. This is important because I know just how independent a blind person can be with no supporting group. I can personally refute every point raised in the 1984 report and probably most arguments that can be put forward against me as a blind person being able to function overseas.

In 1978 I began my own business in Singapore, making and selling display models of corporate aircraft. In my work I traveled between Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore, cleared shipments through customs, obtained contracts, in short did the sort of things that indicate my ability to work in foreign countries. None of this was easy or totally without problems; my blindness was not one of the problems.

During 1985 and 1986 I was living in France, racing tandem bicycles. During that time I traveled through Europe and in 1986 I traveled across the Soviet Union, through China and Tibet, and retraced my steps through Southeast Asia. I include this information to show that my knowledge of foreign travel and situations is relatively current and includes trips to France also during 1987 and 1988.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and I hope that you can sense my concerns and help to resolve this problem as quickly as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Ray Patterson

encl.

1. State Dept. ltr.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 9, 1988

Mr. Ray Patterson  
1427 Gamble Lane  
Escondido, CA 92025

Dear Mr. Patterson:

I wish to refer to your correspondence with the Department of State regarding the 1988 Foreign Service Written Examination.

On October 14, 1988, Mr. Bruce Flatin of this office wrote to you, pointing out that the Department's policy on the employment and assignment of visually impaired persons in the Foreign Service was under review and that you would be informed of the result of that review as soon as possible.

On October 17, 1988, another letter was sent you by Ms. Robin C. Cooke of the Foreign Service Assessment Center regarding the special arrangements you requested for this year's Examination. I regret to inform you that Ms. Cooke's letter was sent to you inadvertently, and that you should disregard it entirely.

The policy review mentioned in Mr. Flatin's letter has now been completed. Henceforth, the Foreign Service Written Examination, in addition to measuring an applicant's intellectual skills, will also be considered a test of an applicant's ability to work effectively and independently from original source documents. I must inform you, therefore, that the Board of Examiners will be unable this year or in the future to offer the Examination in Braille or provide the services of a reader.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Canney".

Paul F. Canney  
Staff Director  
Board of Examiners  
for the Foreign Service

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20270

December 9, 1988

Secretary-Designate James A. Baker III  
Department of State  
S/TT Room 1208A  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Baker:

I work for David Demarest in Public Affairs at the Transition; previously, I was the writer of the Line of the Day at the campaign.

While at the Transition, I have come across the case of a blind man, Mr. Ray Patterson, who is trying to get into the Foreign Service. (Since I had passed the Foreign Service exams several years ago I can understand his dilemma, and took an interest in the case.) The issue of the State Department's policy regarding blind Foreign Service Officers is in the midst of being reviewed, and he is asking that there not be an across-the-board policy regarding the blind -- but that each blind candidate be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as far as ability is concerned. He told me today that he was allowed to take the written exam on December 6, 1988.

The issue is becoming rather well-publicized. State Department Spokesman Charles Redman handled questions from the press about this issue at the November 30 briefing; other blind Foreign Service applicants have appeared on National Public Radio and Good Morning America to discuss this.

I have spoken to Mr. Patterson several times by telephone, and have found him to be a very reasonable man who is not interested in getting special treatment. He is a quiet man and has refused to talk to the media about the issue.

Please find his letter attached. I appreciate any attention you could give it.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Mary Kate Grant  
Special Assistant to the Director  
Office of Public Affairs

cc: David Demarest

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2 THIS FORM MARKS THE FILE LOCATION OF ITEM NUMBER  
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