

AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • March 2005

Annual Report 2004

2004 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

NO MONKEY BUSINESS; LOTS OF CROWING

On Feb. 9, we ended the Year of the Monkey and began the Year of the Rooster. So it is time to end monkey business and crow about our achievements. This year we worked for you both retail and wholesale. We helped individuals caught in a system that sometimes makes "Dilbert" look benign; we supported others whose cases involved matters of principle; and we defended our profession against those who imagine that the men and women of the Foreign Service, like some unruly curs, need "taming" or "bringing to heel."

PRIDE OF PROFESSION

AFSA continued its zero-tolerance policy for cheap shots at the Foreign Service. We defended our consular colleagues in a July 2 letter to the *Washington Post*; we argued in a June 2 letter to the *Federal Times* that the American people deserve qualified and experienced representatives as ambassadors; and we countered the punditry nonsense that accompanied the nomination of Dr. Rice in November 2004.

Our AFSA award ceremony in June 2004 was our time to crow. We honored our best: seniors, mid-levels, entry-levels and specialists who demonstrate creativity and the guts to ask the tough questions. We also honored the eminent scholar/diplomat Ambassador Richard Parker for his "lifetime contributions to American diplomacy." Judging by the hostile fire they drew from some commentators, our 2004 dissent awards were definitely on the mark.

HONOR OUR VETERANS

Retirees are our veterans. We have been pressing to ensure they receive the respect they deserve for honorable service to our country. We have waged this fight on many fronts. We are calling for desperately-needed improvements in how the State Department's retirement offices deal with

both active-duty and retired employees. Miscalculations, badly-worded letters and ham-handed recovery efforts are just part of the problem: the real issue is a lack of responsiveness, transparency and competence. We have been advising victims and have been relentless in keeping these issues in front of the director general and the chief financial officer, who, to their credit, are taking on these complex and sensitive problems.

GRIEVANCES

AFSA continues to provide first-rate legal counsel to members — at no cost. In certain cases where a grievant required outside counsel, AFSA provided financial assistance. AFSA also reacted decisively when USAID thought it could ignore decisions of the Foreign Service Grievance Board to reinstate employees the agency had wrongly separated. In response to agency stonewalling, AFSA both supported the grievants' legal cases and urged the Grievance Board to assert its authority as the final voice.

TRAVEL

AFSA officers have spent a lot of time on the road speaking to the public and our constituencies. The president and State vice president addressed entry-level generalists and specialists at EUR, EAP and AF regional conferences, where we reviewed AFSA's positions and undertook individual counseling. We also spoke to public audiences and the press in Texas, New Jersey, Massachusetts and California about how the Foreign Service serves the American people around the world.

LEGISLATION: A HARD SLOG

After our 2003 success with passage of the law allowing Foreign Service employees

serving overseas to benefit from tax exemptions on the sale of a principal residence, our legislative program ran into difficulty. For the second consecutive year, the State authorization bill — containing personnel provisions of great interest to AFSA members — stalled in the Senate. Our efforts to push the process forward ran into a wall of partisan politics.

At the top of our to-do list remains the issue of pay equity — securing the equivalent of Washington base pay (locality pay) for all Foreign Service personnel. The gap reached 16 percent in 2005 and the collective penalty is about \$110 million. We have been adamant on this issue, and will remain so.



John Limbert

A PERSONAL NOTE: AFSA NEEDS YOU

I will be leaving the presidency this summer, and have been proud to serve our colleagues. AFSA is fortunate in having a devoted professional staff which publishes the *Foreign Service Journal*, advises members on grievances, handles congressional relations, deals with the press, administers our awards, assists retirees and keeps our accounts. We are also fortunate in having a committed membership on whom our ultimate success depends. It is our members who make AFSA powerful and effective. Your courage means we can honor our dissenters; your generosity nourishes our all-important funds; your writing talents make the *Journal* lively. Your willingness to communicate also keeps us honest and focused on what matters. Please stay involved in AFSA: serve on the Governing and Editorial Boards when you're in Washington; be an AFSA representative at post; visit us when you are here on consultations; and please tell me (limbert@afsa.org) what we are doing right or wrong. □

AFSA Annual Report 2004

YEAR IN REVIEW

January

Throughout the year, AFSA assists hundreds of Foreign Service employees with a wide range of concerns, including administrative issues, grievances, discipline cases, security and OIG investigations, and security clearance cases.

The fifth and final installment of the *Foreign Service Journal's* series profiling the various foreign affairs agencies spotlights the Voice of America and the International Broadcasting Bureau.

A \$15,000 perpetual scholarship in memory of Col. Richard D. Hallock is established by his widow, former FSO Myriam Johnston Hallock.

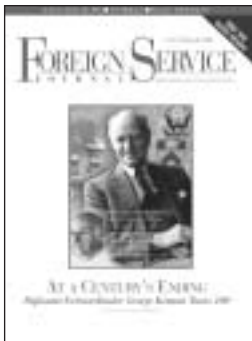
AFSA hosts a luncheon for the National Association of Retired Federal Employees president and legislative staff to discuss retirement and benefit issues of common interest.

AFSA joins the Coalition for Effective Change to follow federal employee issues including proposals on reforming the Civil Service.

February

AFSA President John Limbert attends the Africa Bureau's entry-level conference in Windhoek, Namibia, meeting with individual members throughout the event.

Participants in an AFSA Foreign Service Elderhostel program presented by Arizona retirees visit the American consulate in Nogales, Mexico.



For its symposium celebrating George Kennan's 100th birthday, Princeton University hands out several hundred copies of the *Foreign Service Journal's* February issue profiling Ambassador Kennan.

President John Limbert sends a letter to Assistant Secretary for Resource Management Christopher Burnham expressing AFSA's concerns about retiree annuity overpayment cases.

AFSA arranges for 12 retiree speakers for George Mason University's professional studies program to explain the critical role of the Foreign Service in defending U.S. interests around the world.

March

AFSA/USAID successfully negotiates a resolution of a grievance resulting in the payment of many thousands of dollars to a member who was improperly denied a Difficult-to-Staff Service Differential.

AFSA arranges a panel for five senior retiree speakers to explain Foreign Service careers to some 250 students at Georgetown University.

AFSA's FCS VP attends an annual meeting of Senior Commercial Officers in the Czech Republic and holds individual member meetings.

AFSA/State proposes a solution to the problem of the employment status of Eligible Family Members at AIT Taiwan. AFSA's advocacy prompts the department to add these family members into the Family Member Appointment program, enabling them to accumulate retirement and TSP benefits.

AFSA/State writes to the department concerning the poor service to retirees from the retirement office, especially regarding annuity calculation procedures.

AFSA State VP and AFSA staff participate in the annual Office Management Specialist Conference at the Foreign Service Institute.

April

President John Limbert meets with Assistant Secretary for Resource Management Christopher Burnham to discuss the operations of the Retirement Accounts Division in Charleston and the issue of overpayment-of-annuity cases, which has forced some retirees to pay back thousands of dollars.

State management agrees with AFSA's proposal that henceforth, "gap memos" inserted into Official Performance Files of Foreign Service reservists called to active-duty military service will note that the employee is on active military duty.

AFSA/USAID hosts a highly successful brown-bag lunch, meeting with members and answering their questions and concerns.

AFSA/FAS hosts a presentation on the Office of Personnel Management's core leadership competencies.



MIKKELA THOMPSON

AFSA awards 22 Academic Merit and Art Merit Awards totaling \$23,500 to 20 students.

Acting AFSA President Louise Crane and FCS VP Chuck Ford host a reception in honor of new US&FCS Director General Rhonda Keenum Newman.

AFSA sends a letter to M/MED concerning late settlement of bills for costs incurred during pre-entry physicals. M/MED revises its procedures to speed up processing.

May

The AFSA Memorial Plaque Ceremony is held on May 7 as part of Foreign Affairs Day. Secretary of State Colin Powell presides over the solemn ceremony honoring the men and women of the Foreign Service who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their country abroad.



MIKKELA THOMPSON

AFSA staff and officers take 49 retirees to Capitol Hill to meet with 32 members of Congress during AFSA's "Day on the Hill" for discussions on issues affecting both active-duty and retired Foreign Service members.



MIKKELA THOMPSON

AFSA/USAID succeeds in persuading USAID management to offer an Immediate Benefit Plan to its employees. This plan helps cover immediate expenses, such as mortgage payments, funeral costs and final medical bills, among others, in case of the death of an employee.

AFSA Annual Report 2004

YEAR IN REVIEW

Participants in the AFSA Elderhostel program presented by Colorado retirees visit NORAD's facility inside Cheyenne Mountain.

AFSA holds a meeting with management and HR representatives from FAS and FCS to discuss a range of issues, including the need to tie individual performance to agency goals.

After three years of negotiation, AFSA and FCS agree to new policy guidance on overseas assignments.

AFSA/State completes negotiations on the 2004 promotion precepts. New provisions include removing time-in-grade requirements for tenured generalists seeking promotion from FS-4 to FS-3, and requiring leadership and management training as a prerequisite for promotion by 2007. The department agrees with AFSA that henceforth, Meritorious Service Increases will be given to the top 10 percent of those ranked for promotion but not promoted.

AFSA President John Limbert writes to USAA protesting the company's decision to exclude from membership Foreign Service personnel from USAID, Commerce and Agriculture.

At AFSA's behest, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios and Commerce Secretary Donald Evans send letters to USAA advocating extension of USAA services to Foreign Service employees of FAS, FCS and USAID.

June



MIRKELA THOMPSON

AFSA holds a press conference, "Extreme Diplomacy in Iraq," at which AFSA President John Limbert and former

Baghdad consular officer Beth Payne exhort Congress to approve the full State Department authorization request in view of the dangerous working conditions in Iraq and other posts.

AFSA meets with Diplomatic Security officials for a briefing on security for embassy staff in Baghdad.

The June 24 AFSA Awards ceremony is held in the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room. AFSA presents four awards (\$2,500 each) for constructive dissent as well as awards for extraordinary contributions to effectiveness, professionalism and morale. The Lifetime Contribution to American

Diplomacy Award is presented to Ambassador Richard Parker.



JAY MALLIN

The *Foreign Service Journal* features an interview and profile of Lifetime Contribution

to American Diplomacy Award winner Amb. Parker.

AFSA USAID successfully lobbies USAID management to rethink the expense involved in moving offices to contiguous spaces, the so-called "re-blocking" plan. The resulting savings of millions are thereby freed up for use in more pressing programs.

At AFSA's insistence, the State Department agrees to revise the FAM to require DCMs to serve as mentors for all entry-level employees, not just generalists.

AFSA's ongoing effort to recruit new FAS members includes a recruitment luncheon held during the Global Lite Conference.

The AFSA/State team successfully negotiates new procedures for the operation of reconstituted promotion boards.

Two new-hire DS agents receive increases in their salaries because of AFSA intervention on their behalf to show they were hired at the wrong step level.

July



AUSTIN TRACY

AFSA's National High School Essay Contest winners are honored at the 2004 Youth Awards Ceremony.

AFSA President John Limbert and staff meet again with Assistant Secretary Burnham to talk about AFSA's continuing concerns about retiree overpayment cases.

AFSA proposes that all specialists should receive a certificate, signed by the Secretary of State, upon tenure.

August

A total of \$65,425 in AFSA financial aid awards for the 2004 fall semester is bestowed on 63 Foreign Service youth for undergraduate study. The total financial aid scholarship amount to be bestowed for the 2004-2005 academic year is \$130,300.



JOSH

AFSA/USAID argues successfully before the Foreign Service Grievance Board that an untenured USAID employee should be reinstated. However, the struggle between the FSGB and USAID continues as USAID refuses to implement the Board's judgment.

At AFSA's request, the State Department grants retirees unescorted access to the Federal Center Credit Union branch at SA-44.

AFSA and DACOR host one of many champagne receptions held throughout the year for graduates of the Job Search Program at FSI.

AFSA/State meets with Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Francis X. Taylor and staff to discuss, among other topics, assignments, contact reporting and procedures for suspension of security clearances and the subsequent investigations.

Letters from AFSA are sent to all executive directors of regional bureaus to remind them of the requirement to pay overtime to specialists and untenured officers. AFSA urges State management to send an ALDAC message on the topic, which it does.

September

AFSA State VP Louise Crane and AFSA staff appear on Federal News Radio's "Fed Talk" program to discuss Foreign Service issues, including the lack of locality pay for Foreign Service members serving abroad.

AFSA President John Limbert addresses 75 attendees at a D.C. Elderhostel program on the Middle East. The program set a new record for attendance among the 54 programs presented to date by D.C.-area retirees.

AFSA sends a memo to the FAS administrator encouraging a rigorous domestic review process to help ensure agency management has the necessary structure in place to meet cost-cutting targets.

AFSA attends four Combined Federal Campaign kick-off events to promote the

AFSA Annual Report 2004

YEAR IN REVIEW

AFSA Scholarship Fund (#2422) and the Fund for American Diplomacy (#2460).

AFSA arranges for four senior retirees to explain the role of U.S. diplomacy to audiences at Johns Hopkins University's "Evergreen" professional education program.

The AFSA State VP speaks to CDA assignment officers and career development officers on the topic, "Assignments from the Point of View of the Client," as part of the briefing for incoming CDA staff members. She stresses the necessity for the system to be as transparent as possible.

October

Retirees in Houston put on the first Foreign Service Elderhostel program there. Speakers include former AFSA president John Naland, now principal officer in Matamoras, Mexico. The program marks the 100th put on by AFSA retirees nationally since AFSA Elderhostels began in 1996.

AFSA/State joins in a discussion with the State Department's HR Bureau regarding management's proposal for a career development model for generalists. The model would require generalists to fulfill certain conditions in order to cross the senior threshold.

AFSA/FAS holds a "coffee hour" for new FAS lateral entrants to educate them on AFSA's role.

AFSA President John Limbert and staff meet with the new director of HR/RET, David Dlouhy, to discuss retirement office procedures.

John Limbert meets with Foreign Service retirees, students, university and civic leaders and the media during trips to Houston and San Angelo, Texas.

AFSA/State protests the department's practice of paying no salary to employees for a pay period when the Resource Management office cannot ascertain where an employee is located.

Election process for new AFSA Governing Board, 2005-2007 term, begins with a call for nominations.

November

AFSA press conference is held for the Foreign Affairs Council to roll out the task force report, "Secretary Colin Powell's State Department: An Independent Assessment."

The AFSA president sends a strong letter of support to the chairman of the Foreign Service

Grievance Board in reference to USAID's refusal to abide by the FSGB's final decisions in two cases.

AFSA writes to all regional assistant secretaries urging that they note the denial of Washington-level salaries for Foreign Service employees serving overseas in the briefing papers they prepare for Secretary-designate Condoleezza Rice as one of the challenges they face in their efforts to execute administration policy.

AFSA introduces a new retiree page on its Web site (www.afsa.org/rtvppage.cfm).

AFSA and FCS negotiate a new standard operating procedure to govern the notification of the decision to close overseas posts and/or designate a position to be left unfilled, including new procedures to insure that officers affected by these decisions receive fair and equitable consideration by the assignment panel.

December

During 2004, AFSA hosts 23 recruitment luncheons for incoming Foreign Service employees. An astonishing 91 percent of these employees join AFSA as full members in 2004. Membership stands at 12,852 at year's end.

AFSA welcomes 35 new lifetime members in 2004.

AFSA Public Affairs efforts place 82 articles advocating increased support for U.S. diplomacy in leading media outlets such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Associated Press*. AFSA statements were broadcast on NBC, CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox News, NPR, Bloomberg and AP-TV, among others.

AFSA arranges a record 442 speaker programs in 2004 to explain the importance of U.S. diplomacy to 26,500 attendees in 41 states and Washington, D.C.

AFSA presents the Sinclair Language Awards (\$1,000 each) for achievement in the study of hard languages and their cultures to five employees for the study of Azerbaijani, Dari, Greek, Japanese and Tagalog (2).

AFSA meets with a representative of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations to discuss the

Capital Security Cost Sharing Program and its impact on FAS, FCS and USAID.

The *Journal* sets an all-time record for total annual advertising revenue, topping \$493,000. In spite of a relatively difficult year for the advertising industry, the *FSJ* increased gross ad sales by more than 10 percent.

AFSA arranges for Saudi specialist Stephen Buck, a retired FSO and current *Foreign Service Journal* Editorial Board member, to explain the key role of the Foreign Service in the war against terrorism on CNN's prime-time program "Now."

AFSA participates in the development and approval of an Iraq recognition package of benefits which would give FCS officers benefits and recognition equal to those afforded to employees from other foreign affairs agencies working in Iraq.

At AFSA's urging, State management agrees to allow reconstituted promotion boards for those employees omitted from consideration by the regular selection panels due to an administrative error.

Several Foreign Service employees in Africa lose several thousands of dollars after thieves copy their checks, then counterfeit and cash them. AFSA urges Citigroup to agree to reimburse the employees and cooperate with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security in its investigation. Citigroup agrees.

AFSA holds three champagne receptions for retiring members, and welcomes over 125 new and rejoining retired members.

By year's end, over 150 libraries and over 120 college career centers around the country have AFSA's book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, on their shelves. More than 15 universities have adopted the book for courses on diplomacy and international relations. A revised printing is released for 2005.

At the end of 2004, AFSA has 159 Post Representatives at our embassies and missions overseas. They serve as a liaison with AFSA and pass on the views of members at each post from all the foreign affairs agencies.



AFSA Annual Report 2004

Governing Board

From left: Sheldon Daitch (IBB Rep), Louise Crane (State VP), Bill Crawford (FCS Rep), Danny Hall (Treasurer), Michael Conlon (FAS Rep), John Sullivan (State Rep), Laura Scandurra (FAS VP), Chuck Ford (FCS VP), Bill Carter (USAID VP), John Limbert (President), Tuli Mushingi (State Rep), Ted Wilkinson (Retiree Rep), David Reuther (Retiree Rep), Jim Wagner (State Rep) and Stan Zuckerman (Retiree Rep).

Not Shown: Scot Folensbee (State Rep), Tex Harris (Secretary), Elizabeth Horst (State Rep), George Jones (Retiree VP), Todd Kushner (State Rep), Tom Olson (USAID Rep) and Gil Sheinbaum (Retiree Rep)



AUSTIN TRACY

The Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Kent C. Brokenshire, William W. Jordan, Laurie Kassman, Stephen W. Buck, Carol A. Giacomo, Governing Board Liaison Ted Wilkinson, Kay Webb Mayfield, Virginia F. Smith, Editorial Board Chair Hollis Summers and Christopher L. Teal. Not pictured: Patricia "Pati" Chaplin.

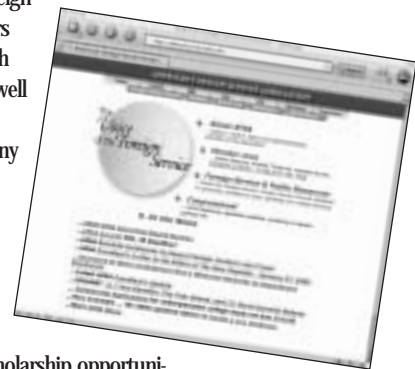
www.afsa.org

ON THE WEB at
www.afsa.org

The total number of visitors to the AFSA Web site increased steadily in 2004. The AFSA Web site is providing Foreign Service members with content-rich information as well as serving as a resource for many non-Foreign Service visitors. Our site continues to draw a large number of students interested in scholarship opportunities, internships, AFSA's national essay contest and the *Inside a U.S. Embassy* book.

The Foreign Service community looks to the AFSA Web site to provide information on labor-management issues such as current negotiations and employee guidance, legislative updates and AFSA membership. The *Foreign Service Journal* is also attracting a larger online audience, with nearly 20,000 visitors in the last quarter of 2004 and its own new address, www.fsjournal.org.

AFSA encourages all members to sign up for the AFSANET Listserv at www.afsa.org. The e-mail service provides weekly updates on items of interest to the foreign affairs community.



AFSA Annual Report 2004

Staff

Finance and Administration



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Controller Kalpna Srimal, Accounting Assistant Steven Tipton and Executive Director Susan Reardon.

- Accounting
- Financial Management
- Staff Recruitment & Supervision
- Building Administration
- Board and Committee Support

Foreign Service Journal



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Associate Editor Shawn Dorman, Editor Steve Honley, Senior Editor Susan Maitra, Advertising & Circulation Manager Ed Miltenberger. Inset: Business Manager Mikkela Thompson. Not Pictured: Art Director Caryn Suko Smith.

- Editing
- Writing
- Design
- Advertising
- Subscriptions and Sales

Labor Management



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Grievance Attorney Josiah Slotnick, Office Manager Christine Warren, General Counsel Sharon Papp (in front), Labor Management Attorney Zlatana Badrich, Grievance Attorney Neera Parikh, Labor Management Specialist James Yorke. Not pictured: Senior Labor Management Advisor Doug Broome and Law Clerk Lindsay Kay.

- Negotiations
- Protecting Benefits
- Grievance Counseling
- OIG & DS Investigations
- Member Inquiries
- Informing the Field

Outreach Programs



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Congressional Affairs Director Ken Nakamura, Executive Assistant Austin Tracy, Retiree Liaison Bonnie Brown, and Director of Communications Tom Switzer. Not pictured: Professional Issues Coordinator Barbara Berger and Elderhostel Coordinator Ward Thompson.

Public Outreach

- Speakers Bureau
- Elderhostel
- Memorial Plaque
- Foreign Service Day
- Diplomats Online
- AFSA Awards
- *Inside a U.S. Embassy* Book

Congressional Affairs

- Lobbying
- Tracking Legislation
- Hill Testimony
- Grassroots Campaigns

Retiree Services

- Member Inquiries
- Retiree Newsletter
- Retiree Directory

Member Services



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Membership Representative Cory Nishi, Database/Web Associate Meijing Shan, Administrative Assistant Ana Lopez and Membership Director Janet Hedrick.

- Member Recruitment
- Post Reps
- Insurance Programs
- Address Changes
- AFSANET
- AFSA Web Site

Scholarships



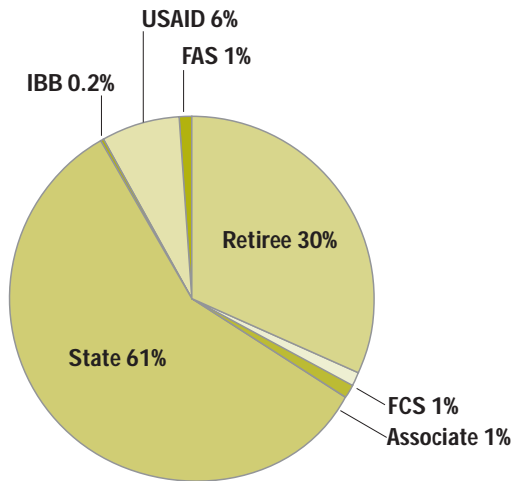
AUSTIN TRACY

- Financial Aid
- Merit Awards
- Art Merit Awards
- Committee on Education

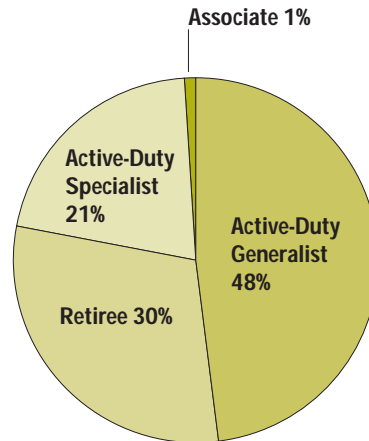
Scholarship Administrator Lori Dec.

AFSA Annual Report 2004

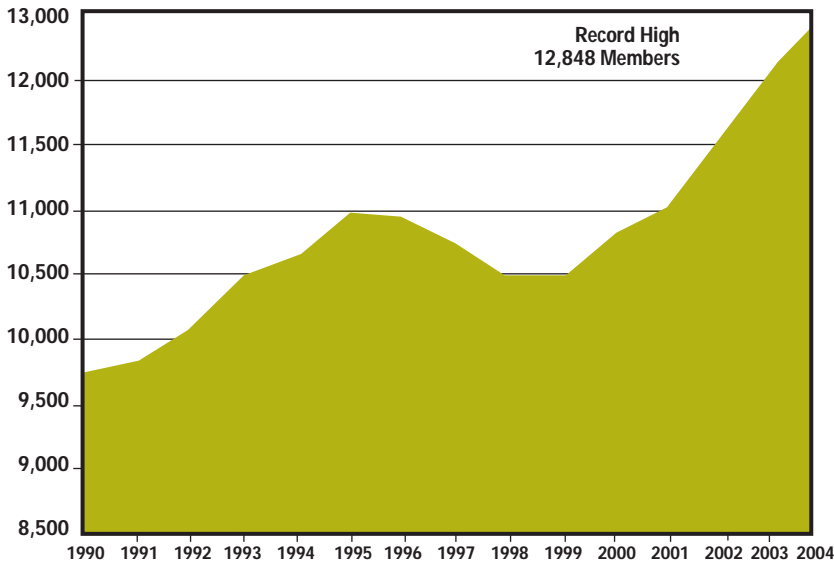
Membership by Constituency



Membership by Function



Total Membership 1990 to 2004



AUDIT REPORT for AFSA

AFSA's audited financial statements for 2004 will be available on the AFSA Web site (www.afsa.org) in May.

Budget in Brief

INCOME	\$	EXPENSES	\$
Dues	2,035,000	Membership Programs.....	1,144,626
<i>Foreign Service Journal</i> Advertising	493,000	<i>Foreign Service Journal</i>	781,652
Insurance Programs.....	25,000	Legislative Affairs.....	179,183
Legislative Action Fund	55,000	Professional Programs and Outreach	440,587
Other	69,000	Scholarships	358,952
Professional Programs and Outreach	326,430	Administration.....	441,382
Scholarships	363,840	Contribution to Endowment and Reserves.....	20,888
TOTAL	3,367,270	TOTAL	3,367,270

AFSA Annual Report 2004

AFSA BY THE NUMBERS IN 2004

15:	.....	Number of one-week programs on the Foreign Service presented to public audiences by AFSA retirees through Elderhostel in 2004
35:	.....	New Lifetime Members
82:	.....	AFSA articles and letters placed in newspapers nationwide
125:	.....	AFSANETs sent in 2004
442:	.....	AFSA speaker programs nationwide
900:	.....	Total attendance at AFSA Foreign Service Elderhostel programs, matching peak year of 2001
1,161:	.....	New active-duty and retired members
6,114:	.....	Subscribers to the AFSANET Listserve
12,852:	.....	AFSA members at year's end
15,405:	.....	Dollar amount raised in the 2004 Scholarship Fund appeal
23,475:	.....	Dollar amount raised in the 2004 Fund for American Diplomacy appeal
23,500:	.....	Academic and art merit award dollars bestowed on 22 Foreign Service high school seniors
26,500:	.....	Attendees at AFSA speaker programs nationwide
49,544:	.....	Dollar amount donated to the AFSA-PAC
130,300:	.....	Scholarship dollars bestowed as part of AFSA's need-based Financial Aid program to 63 Foreign Service children
493,000:	.....	Dollar amount of advertising in the <i>Foreign Service Journal</i>

Benefits of AFSA Membership

LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS: AFSA negotiates the regulations affecting employees' careers. We work to make the Foreign Service a better place in which to work, live and raise a family. Our network of AFSA post representatives provides on-site assistance to overseas members.

CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY: AFSA is your advocate before Congress on issues affecting the careers of active members and the annuities of retired members.

OMBUDSMAN: We work to resolve member problems with pay, allowances, claims, annuities, health care, and many other issues.

VOICE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE: As the professional association of the Foreign Service since 1924, AFSA works to strengthen our profession and is ever vigilant for threats to the career Foreign Service.

GRIEVANCE REPRESENTATION: AFSA's legal staff provides hands-on assistance with grievance proceedings when your rights are violated.

OUTREACH: AFSA communicates the views of the Foreign Service on professional issues to the news media and directly to the general public.

FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL: Our monthly magazine offers provocative articles that will keep you current on developments in the foreign affairs profession.

AFSA NEWS: AFSA's monthly newsletter, inside the *Foreign Service Journal*, highlights issues affecting your daily life.

AFSA WEB SITE: Our online member area includes a member directory and member forums.

AFSANET: Regular e-mail updates keep you current on issues of importance to the Foreign Service community.

LEGAL SERVICES: We offer free legal advice and representation on employment issues, including security and OIG investigations, discipline cases and security clearance proceedings.

INSURANCE PROGRAMS: You can choose among competitively priced insurance programs designed for the Foreign Service community, including professional liability insurance, accident, dental and personal property/transit.

RETIREE SKILLS DATABASE: Our online database lists AFSA members who are available for jobs, college teaching, and speaking engagements in a wide variety of areas.

AFSA SCHOLARSHIPS: Approximately 100 merit-based and financial-need scholarships are granted every year to Foreign Service family members. Since 1926, AFSA has awarded approximately \$4,450,000 in scholarships.

AFSA AWARDS: This unique awards program honors constructive dissent and outstanding performance.

RETIREE NEWSLETTER: This bimonthly <http://www.afsa.org/newsletters.html> newsletter is exclusively for retired members.

DIRECTORY OF RETIRED MEMBERS: This invaluable annual listing, by state, of contact information for retired members is provided to all retired AFSA members.

MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS: AFSA members are eligible for special discounts on subscriptions to major foreign affairs journals.

ESPRIT DE CORPS: We work to build a sense of common cause and professional pride among all Foreign Service members: active and retired; officers and specialists; entry-level and senior.

AFSA MEMORIAL PLAQUES: Established in 1933, and maintained by AFSA, these plaques in the Truman Building lobby honor members of the Foreign Service who lost their lives overseas in the line of duty.

AFSA Core Values

The American Foreign Service Association

Established in 1924

MISSION

To make the Foreign Service a more effective agent of United States international leadership.

VISION

We work to make the Foreign Service a better-supported, more respected, more satisfying place in which to spend a career and raise a family.



– **RESPONSIVENESS:** We listen to our members and actively promote their interests.

– **EFFECTIVENESS:** We act with a sense of urgency, get results and make a difference.

– **INTEGRITY:** We demonstrate openness, honesty and fairness in everything we do.

– **EFFICIENCY:** We carefully expend our resources where they can have maximum impact.

– **COMMUNITY:** We foster teamwork, respect each other, and enjoy our time together.

– **COURAGE:** We encourage responsible risk-taking in order to achieve results.

– **PATRIOTISM:** We are faithful to the grand and enduring ideals that gave our nation birth.

– **EMPOWERMENT:** We trust each other to give our best efforts guided by these core values. □

Welcoming a New Secretary

An Unprecedented Meeting with AFSA

On Jan. 5, several weeks before her confirmation as the new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice met with representatives of AFSA — nine State active-duty AFSA Governing Board members, including President John Limbert and State Vice President Louise Crane — and colleagues from the Foreign Affairs Council, led by former AFSA president Ambassador Thomas Boyatt.

Amb. Limbert used the opportunity to make two key points: first, that the 11,000 Foreign Service employees at the Department of State are a loyal, talented and dedicated group of men and women who work for her and the commander-in-chief. “I urge you to make the best use of the talents and experience of this unique group,” he said. Second, he asked for her support on the key issue of “salary equity.” He pointed out that for members of the Foreign Service, moving from Washington to an overseas assignment today means taking a 16 percent pay cut.

In her remarks, Dr. Rice said she is

well-acquainted with AFSA and knows its importance, and wants to open a channel of communications. She said she is open to suggestions on personnel issues.

Dr. Rice emphasized her determination to make the best use of the Foreign Service, noting that now is a time to mobilize this enormously talented group in the interest of great causes. Her intention, she said, is to look to the people in the State Department not just to execute foreign policy but to shape it and give it the intellectual structure it needs.

Dr. Rice underlined her concern about the lives of the people who serve in the difficult places. She also emphasized her concern about the pay issue and security. Her first department briefing, she added, was on management issues. She said she shares Secretary Powell’s view that employees must be well-trained and that they must have access to the tools they need. She also promised, in return, to demand excellence from her people.

Focus on Diplomacy

The opening statement presented by Dr. Rice in her Jan. 18 confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee included the following remarks:

“In all that lies ahead, the primary instrument of American diplomacy will be the Department of State, and the men and women of its Foreign and Civil Services and Foreign Service Nationals. The time for diplomacy is now. ... We know from experience how hard they work, the risks they and their families take, and the hardships they endure. We will be asking even more of them. ... They will need to develop new skills, and rise to new challenges. This time of global transformation calls for transformational diplomacy. ... I will personally work to ensure that America’s diplomats have all the tools they need to do their jobs — from training to budgets to mentoring to embassy security. I also intend to strengthen the recruitment of new personnel, because American diplomacy needs to constantly hire and develop top talent. And I will seek to further diversify the State Department’s workforce.”

A Warm Reception for Secretary Condoleezza Rice

On Jan. 27, Condoleezza Rice received a warm welcome as she arrived for her first day on the job as Secretary of State. “This is a really remarkable time in our country’s history,” she told the crowd of several hundred. “The president has set forth a really bold agenda for American foreign policy and the State Department has got to be in the lead in this period in which diplomacy will be so important to solidifying the gains of the last few years and to pressing forward an agenda for a freer and more prosperous world.”

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AFSA Reaches a National Audience

BY TOM SWITZER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

A FSA enhanced its national outreach efforts in 2004 aimed at broadening and deepening public support for funding for diplomatic readiness. One of our most effective outreach elements is our **speakers program**, which deployed 442 Foreign Service speakers in 2004. They explained the importance of U.S. diplomacy for American national interests to more than 26,000 attendees in 42 states and Washington, D.C.

Audiences ranged from world affairs councils and universities to community-service organizations, “town meetings,” churches and high schools. Amb. Grant Smith, Stephen Buck and David Reuther elicited glowing reviews from attendees at the prestigious Johns Hopkins “Evergreen” adult education series for their presentations on U.S. policies in South Asia and the Middle East. These speakers also described the attractions and challenges of careers in the Foreign Service, including insightful considerations of family issues.

AFSA speakers addressed other topics including: counterterrorism; public diplomacy; U.S. initiatives in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia; United Nations peacekeeping; international crime, migration and environmental issues; and human rights.

All AFSA speakers were provided with talking points and issue updates from AFSA, as well as promotional material for AFSA’s excellent book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*.

Speakers stressed the critical role of diplomacy in advancing America’s vital security and economic interests around the globe. They also encouraged audience members to contact their congressional representa-

AFSA speakers explained the importance of U.S. diplomacy to more than 26,000 attendees in 42 states and Washington, DC.



tives to request increased funding for U.S. diplomatic readiness. Moreover, speakers reached out to talented youth — especially minority-group members — to encourage them to consider Foreign Service careers.

AFSA also held major **press conferences** to highlight the vital role of the Foreign Service. A June press conference, titled “Extreme Diplomacy,” featured AFSA President John Limbert and former Baghdad consular officer Beth Payne, who described their dangerous working conditions during recent tours in Iraq and appealed to Congress to approve the full State Department authorization bill. A November AFSA press conference presented the Foreign Affairs Council’s assessment of Secretary Colin Powell’s stewardship of the State Department since 2001. Both events generated heavy media coverage.

AFSA’s **media outreach** efforts were also intensive in 2004. We placed, either directly or through AFSA retirees, 83 op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, articles and press releases advocating increased public and congressional support for U.S.

diplomacy in leading media entities including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Government Executive*, *Federal Times*, Associated Press, NPR and CNN. Our motto is: “No cheap shot against the Foreign Service will go unanswered.”

Among our most successful efforts was AFSA’s annual awards ceremony held at the State Department in June, which attracted several network TV cameras and some 20 journalists from major media. The

result was in-depth treatment of this event via some 32 media outlets nationwide, including the *Washington Post*, NBC, CNN, ABC, the Associated Press and NPR.

AFSA outreach efforts have placed heavy emphasis on the vital role played by U.S. diplomacy in the struggle against terrorism. Since 9/11 we have deployed more than 450 AFSA retiree experts on Middle East and South Asian issues for speaker and media programs nationwide. We have held frequent discussions regarding AFSA issues with the more than 35 diplomatic correspondents attached to the State Department, as well as with editors and bureau chiefs of national media based in Washington.

These outreach programs have promoted three important AFSA goals: broadening the Foreign Service constituency through outreach to the public; enhancing public awareness of global affairs and of the key role of the Foreign Service and diplomacy; and activating the AFSA retiree constituency by involving it in significant programs that draw on their backgrounds and skills in telling our story to audiences nationwide.

If you want to be involved with AFSA outreach, contact me at Switzer@afsa.org, or call toll-free (800) 704-2372, ext. 501. □



AFSA — Foreign Affairs Council Press Conference.

AFSA Urges Better Treatment of Retirees

BY BONNIE BROWN, RETIREE ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR



Imagine settling into retirement with confidence that your pension will provide for your old age and that of your spouse. Then you receive a letter from the State Department informing you that a miscalculation has been made; your monthly pension will be reduced and you will have to return the overpayments. If the adjustments are modest, you can absorb the costs; but if they involve tens of thousands of dollars, say hello to the poorhouse and good-bye to your retirement security.

Retiree after retiree came to AFSA with this problem during the past year. Most retirees did not understand how the errors in calculation had been made. Others, particularly those elderly in reduced circumstances and in ill health, were frightened and unsure about the future. None felt that the department had given them sufficient information to understand exactly what had happened or how to contest the demand for repayment. As AFSA became involved, we not only saw the human dimension, but encountered a dysfunctional system. The matter of overpayment claims raised questions about the department's processes for making retirement calculations, communicating with retirees and using a transparent and fair procedure for granting waivers and compromise of claims.

After a recent audit of retirement accounts revealed errors, the department sent out an estimated 200 letters to retirees, explaining that they had been overpaid, their monthly annuities would be reduced and they would be required to refund the overpayments. To our knowledge, most errors involved the murky area of Social Security payments or entitlements when the new retirement system went into effect, as well as disability benefits and child survivor annuities. Most often, retirees explained that they had relied on department calculations and counsel and had expected the department to coordinate with the Social Security Administration.

Their reliance was misplaced. The department made mistakes and there was no internal procedure for correction or periodic review. Nevertheless, retirees were held strictly accountable. If the department decided a retiree "should have known" of an error, it held him or her accountable not for a simple mistake, but for a department lapse compounded by the passage of time, sometimes as much as 15 or 20 years.

Many retirees reported difficulty getting information from the department. (They had received a perfunctory initial notice and a follow-up letter stating the amount to repay, with limited information about how to document financial qualifications and pursue a request for waiver.) In many instances, their letters, e-mails and telephone calls went unanswered. At times they received contradictory communications. Months elapsed. Retirees told AFSA about the stress of the situation, not knowing how they would be able to get along financially and worrying about the effect of the prolonged waiver and grievance process on their health and financial planning. In the absence of adequate department guidance, AFSA advised annuitants to use the well-developed Office of Personnel Management financial qualifications form and waiver guidelines as a basis for requesting waivers.

In denying waiver requests, the department took a hard line and gave scant explanation. Noting that retirees are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of their retirement calculations, it found them at fault, saying they should have known of an error, even one the department had made years before. It found no financial hardship in instances when a retiree had to use funds put aside to provide care for a family member with a progressive illness or when repayment reduced the amount available for living expenses to a bare-bones level.

The length of time the department took to resolve cases also took its toll. By the time some retirees had begun the grievance

process and the department indicated it would consider a compromise, they were already exhausted by the process and in ill health.

Why does the department treat retirees this way? When it saw the results of the retirement accounts audit, why didn't it work with affected retirees in a humane, timely and transparent manner? Most affected retirees owed modest amounts and were willing to make the repayments, so the process could have been an easy one for all concerned. So why — given its ongoing failure to verify and correct miscalculations — did the department ask a few individuals to make catastrophic repayments? Like Police Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*, the department was relentless in its pursuit of these retirees.

Responding to members' concerns, AFSA staff and labor-management lawyers have worked in a number of ways to assist retirees, helping them with financial showings, waiver requests, grievances and efforts to compromise claims. AFSA has sent letters on behalf of retirees to State management, and has had numerous meetings to discuss overpayment with State Department officials, including the director general, the chief financial officer, the head of the Retirement Accounts Division in Charleston, staff and the new director of the Retirement Office.

What should be done now? As a matter of equity and good conscience the department, in the longest-running overpayment cases, should limit its repayment requests to the amount overpaid during the last three years. Second, building on some recent improvements made in RAD and HR/RET, the department should commit the personnel, financial resources and information systems needed to create a retirement system that works for, rather than harasses, its retirees. They deserve no less for their many years of loyal service. □

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS UPDATE

In the waning days of the 108th Congress, lawmakers cleared and sent to the president two bills that affect the benefits of all federal employees, including the Foreign Service.

◆ **S. 2657** (signed by the president on Dec. 23, now designated as PL 108-496) establishes a voluntary program for federal employees and annuitants to purchase supplemental dental and vision insurance as part of their Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan. Like the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program, it is fully funded by the employee. However, the federal government can leverage its purchasing power and lower the costs for improved dental and vision benefits. Currently, federal health plans are viewed by many to have minimal dental and health benefits. The chief sponsors for S. 2657 were Senators Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii).

◆ **H.R. 4324** (signed by the president on

Dec. 21, now designated as PL 108-469) allows Thrift Savings Plan participants to elect or modify their contributions in any pay period instead of having to wait until the designated semiannual "open season." This bill will help new employees by eliminating current waiting periods for enrolling in TSP, and also provides programs to improve the investment and retirement planning skills of TSP participants. Sponsors of these positive changes were Senators Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) on the Senate side, and Rep. Tom Davis (R-Va.) in the House of Representatives.

◆ The \$388 billion omnibus spending bill (signed by the president on Dec. 8, now designated as PL 108-447) includes a 3.5-percent pay increase for both military and non-military federal employees. Members of the Senior Executive Service and Senior Foreign Service can receive the full increase based upon their income ceilings and the discretion of their agency. Because Foreign Service at the FS-1 level and below who are posted abroad do not qualify for locality pay, they will not receive that portion of the

increase and will see their income further disadvantaged for serving abroad.

On Jan. 4, the new 109th Congress convened. The president submitted his FY 2006 budget request in early February, and a new legislative session is under way. At the top of AFSA's legislative agenda for 2005 is the expansion of "locality pay" for non-senior Foreign Service employees in the field. We are also carrying forward objectives — such as restoration of prescriptive relief, reduction in the low-ranking "quota," and implementation of a PIT buy-back of contributions toward retirement — that we did not achieve during the 108th Congress.

There are many issues that AFSA has tackled based on concerns raised from the field, such as the change in the tax code on the sale of a principal residence, the amending of the Virginia Constitution to allow Foreign Service personnel outside the state to vote in state and local elections, enhanced ability to send children to school away from the local post facility, and many other provisions. More input is always welcome. Please contact AFSA to share your concerns. □

WORLDSPACE DONATES 15 RADIOS TO AFSA

AFSA Passes Along Satellite Radio Donations to Posts

AFSA received a donation of 15 satellite radios from WorldSpace Satellite Radio in December, and is passing them along to posts around the world that can make best use of them. To date, AFSA's Advertising Manager Ed Miltenberger has sent eight receivers to CLO offices at posts chosen with the help of the Family Liaison Office. These posts are: Conakry, Malabo, Bangui, Khartoum, Monrovia, Praia, Yaounde and N'Djamena. The radios have been donated along with a one-year subscription to the radio service. Five radios will be donated by the AFSA membership department to the five AFSA representatives who help sign up the most new AFSA members

during the current membership drive.

We all heard about Howard Stern's highly public defection to satellite radio in 2004. Satellite radio is gaining popularity as an alternative to commercial radio in the U.S. and now, overseas as well.

WorldSpace Satellite Radio was founded in 1990 "to create a new form of electronic media using satellites to broadcast directly to people across the globe" (as stated on www.worldspace.com). In June 2004, WorldSpace introduced a multinational satellite-radio subscription plan for \$10 per month.

WorldSpace Subscription Operations Director Bill Rock explains that his company chose to donate radios to AFSA because "the feedback we have received from Foreign Service members, NGOs and Peace Corps Volunteers, as well as U.S. and British military personnel abroad, has been great. We wanted to get more people exposed to the product and felt that AFSA could find places around



Susan Reardon and Bill Rock at WorldSpace.

the world where the WorldSpace service and receivers would get the most use. We have made similar donations to military service personnel abroad."

WorldSpace currently rules the satellite radio market outside the U.S., but other companies, including Sirius Satellite Radio, will be trying to get in on the international market. So, for those of you in far-flung locales who have trouble getting along without Diane Rehm, country music or even Howard Stern, a satellite radio might be your answer. □

HAIL AND FAREWELL

AFSA Governing Board Change

In December, AFSA bid farewell to IBB Representative to the Governing Board Laurie Kassman, who has left the Foreign Service to take a position at the Middle East Institute as Director of Communications and Outreach. We are pleased to report that she will remain on the *Foreign Service Journal's* Editorial Board as a public member. Replacing Laurie as IBB rep is Sheldon Daitch, a Foreign Service engineer. He is reachable at sdaitch@ibb.gov.

AFSA Staff Change

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Ward Thompson for helping to create and ably directing the first AFSA Foreign Service Elderhostel programs for seven years. Ward is now fully retired from AFSA, although he has agreed to let us call on him for the Elderhostel and AFSA Speakers circuits on occasion.

We are happy to announce that Janice Bay has taken over from Ward as AFSA's Director of Elderhostel Programs. Janice retired from the State Department in 2003 after a 36-year Foreign Service career including assignments as Deputy Assistant Secretary in EB, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in HR and tours in Germany, France, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. She can be reached at (202) 944-5508 or at bay@afsa.org.

Foreign Affairs Day Set for May 6

Foreign Affairs Day, the annual homecoming for retired State Department employees, will be held this year on Friday, May 6. There will be a ceremony at the site of the AFSA Memorial Plaques.

More details will follow in April. Mark your calendars now so you can join AFSA for this important event. The guest list includes everyone invited last year and everyone newly retired. To make sure you're on the list, e-mail foreignaffairsday@state.gov.

AFSA's Day on the Hill 2005

On Thursday, May 5, AFSA will again lead a group of retired Foreign Service personnel to visit their senators and representatives on Capitol Hill. Please join AFSA in support of the Foreign Service and American diplomacy. Look for more information in next month's *AFSA News* and in your Foreign Affairs Day mailing. □

Condi, the Foreign Service will walk on hot coals for you if ...

Some months ago I devoted one of these columns to locality pay, saying it is AFSA's Job Number One. It still is. Once the White House announced Dr. Condoleezza Rice's nomination to replace Secretary Powell, I wrote to the director general and to the assistant secretary for each regional bureau. I asked each of them to list the lack of locality pay for Foreign Service employees overseas in the new Secretary's briefing books as one of the major challenges they face. I urged them to put into their briefing books a note about the inequity of requiring members of the Foreign Service and their families to give up 16 percent of their pay when they go overseas, a gap between Washington salaries and overseas salaries that grows more punitive year by year.



Then, when the director general announced a town meeting in December, I told HRI I would like to be the first person he called upon in the Q&A session. They agreed. I asked the director general for his position on locality pay. He replied that he is for it.

The first briefing for Dr. Rice was on management issues. Security, personnel, budget, buildings. I was assured by several who were present that locality pay was raised and the case was made for it to be an urgent priority. And yes, the fact that our CIA, NSA and DIA colleagues all receive Washington pay while overseas was mentioned.

Then, AFSA asked for a meeting with the Secretary-designate and it was scheduled. In our preparatory meetings with AFSA President John Limbert, the active-duty State members of the AFSA Governing Board insisted that for this meeting, the sole, single issue was asking her to get locality pay for everyone overseas. Locality pay was the one issue Ambassador Limbert mentioned in his introduction. AFSA understands that the new Secretary is well aware of the importance of this issue for the Foreign Service. She knows the gap only grows. She knows overseas service is harsher than ever. In her meeting with AFSA, she acknowledged the sacrifice our families are making accompanying us overseas or staying behind when 500 of us serve at one of the 15 unaccompanied posts.

What else can we do? AFSA will be writing to all U.S. ambassadors asking them to make a forceful case for locality pay when members of Congress, as well as staff delegations, visit.

AFSA is now updating our legislative agenda, and the top priority remains locality pay. We are currently calculating how much salary and how much in TSP you lose while overseas during an average career. It is a considerable sum. Now add to that the lack of employment for spouses in a dual-income, two-401(k), two-Social Security society and it is clear we are asked to bear a significant sacrifice.

What can you do? When a codel or staffdel visits your post, get this item on the agenda. At home, most of us are residents of the Maryland and Virginia suburbs and our congressional representatives are very senior members of both parties in each house of Congress. It will not hurt us to remind them that considerable numbers of their constituents are making a great financial sacrifice to serve our country, one which they are in a position to correct.

It won't be easy, but we must keep up the pressure. Even if rebuffed this year and next, we must keep reminding everyone of the sacrifices we willingly make for our country. Locality pay should not be one of them. □

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GRADUATE RESEARCH

A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE at the University of Cambridge, U.K. (now resident at George Washington University), is conducting research on the involvement of Thailand in the Vietnam War, the Secret War in Laos, and conflicts in Cambodia. The student is interested in contacting federal gov. employees who worked in SE Asia, or whose job responsibilities included that region; i.e. Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam during the years 1962-1975. Please contact: Sutayut Osornprasop at e-mail: so220@cam.ac.uk.