



## AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION GENERAL AUDIENCE TALKING POINTS

*(One idea is to start each talk by asking the audience what comes to mind when you say the word “diplomat.” Many stereotypes come up – striped pants, bureaucrat, cocktail parties, etc. You can then use your presentation to dismantle those stereotypes.)*

- Today, 9 in 10 Americans support strong U.S. global leadership. Such leadership is unthinkable without a strong professional Foreign Service deployed around the world protecting and defending America’s people, interests, and values. If the United States retreats, we leave a vacuum that will be filled by others who do not share our values or interests.
- More than 14,000 active duty men and women of the U.S. Foreign Service promote our country's peace, security, prosperity, and development. Our members spend about 2/3 of their careers deployed overseas, usually in difficult and often in dangerous places. Our work not only helps to prevent war, but allows our country to confront our adversaries and collaborate with our allies using smarter, better-informed strategies.
- We maintain an enduring presence at 270 embassies and consulates around the world, so Americans seeking to navigate unfamiliar terrain—whether to study, adopt a child, or expand an export market—have a home base to turn to, an embassy staffed by fellow Americans who speak the local language fluently and know how to get things done. If you or your loved ones are traveling abroad and you are the victim of a crime, or you have a run-in with law enforcement, the U.S. Embassy is there to help.
- We do our work by engaging with the local people, whether with government officials or average citizens. Our work to stabilize countries and influence foreign opinion translates into untold savings of both money and American lives otherwise lost to war. As Secretary of Defense James Mattis told the Senate in March 2013 when he was Commander of U.S. Central Command, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.”

- We are proud to serve our country, including putting ourselves in harm's way when necessary: 89% of current Foreign Service members have served in a hardship posting, and 10% of assignments are unaccompanied, meaning they are in war zones too dangerous to take their families. If you come to the State Department or USAID in Washington, you will see carved into the walls the names of the hundreds of brave men and women who gave their lives overseas in service to their country.
- The work of the Foreign Service creates jobs. U.S. commercial advocacy abroad has achieved record exports, reaching an all-time high of \$2.21 trillion in 2016 and supporting 11.5 million American jobs. Furthermore, the foreign students and tourists whose travel we facilitate contribute \$275 billion to the U.S. economy every year.
- The Foreign Service isn't just the State Department. Our colleagues at the **U.S. Agency for International Development** deliver food aid and disaster assistance while advancing democracy around the world. The **Foreign Commercial Service** promotes American businesses and exports abroad, while the **Foreign Agricultural Service** opens markets for U.S. agricultural products and works on food security. The **Broadcasting Board of Governors**, through Voice of America, brings America's values right to your radio or wireless device without the interference of local propaganda. There are no cocktail parties in the job description of a modern diplomat.
- When we return from dangerous places where we have served our country, we do not expect public recognition. We find our work fulfilling in its own right. But we do want our fellow Americans to know about the work that we do. America remains the most powerful country in the world. It is vital for any democracy to have an informed citizenry, but all the more so now, given our country's unique role in the world. If you take nothing else away from my talk today, please take it as a call to continue your efforts to learn everything that you can about foreign affairs, and encourage your friends and family to do the same.
- While we are gathered here together, 14,000 Foreign Service officers and specialists are on watch at some 270 American Embassies and Consulates all over the world. They are our first line of defense. As 120 retired generals and admirals recently attested, the proposed budget cuts would make our country less safe. We are all for streamlining the State Department, but not at the cost of losing our core diplomatic strength. We should not, in a dangerous world, abandon the field to our adversaries. I hope you will urge your elected officials to provide the moral and financial support necessary to maintain U.S. global leadership with effective and empowered diplomats and aid workers.