



# Foreign Service and AFSA Centennial

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) shares its birthday with the modern Foreign Service. As the professional association and the labor union for the U.S. Foreign Service, AFSA has been looking after the health of the profession and its people for the past century.

Today, AFSA represents 31,000 active and retired Foreign Service employees at the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, the U.S. Agency for Global Media, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The 2024 Foreign Service centennial is an opportunity for a year-long celebration of the rich history and significant contributions of our diplomats and development professionals. To appropriately commemorate this milestone – and our own 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary -- AFSA has planned a series of events and activities.

**Honorary Committee.** Secretary Blinken serves as chair of the Centennial Honorary Committee. Committee members include Presidents Bush and Obama; former secretaries of state Rice, Clinton, Kerry, and Baker; USAID Administrator Samantha Power; Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield; as well as other diplomatic luminaries.

**Centennial gala.** A gala celebrating the Foreign Service will take place on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, in the Benjamin Franklin State Dining Room from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Director General Marcia Bernicat’s office will co-host the event. This event is not open to the public.

**Presidential library exhibition.** The Reagan Presidential Library, the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, and the Nixon Presidential Library will host exhibits on the Foreign Service for starting in Spring 2024.

***The Foreign Service Journal, centennial issue.*** The issue will feature letters from select Honorary Committee members, the winning centennial essay (more below), as well as a collection of mini essays on the topic of “What makes me #FS Proud” submitted by members of the Foreign Service.

***Foreign Service Journal writing competition.*** In September 2023, the *FSJ* launched a centennial writing competition that invites AFSA members, especially younger and newer diplomats, to

submit their thoughts about the future of the Foreign Service. The winning essay will be published in the centennial issue of the *FSJ*, and the second- and third-place winning essays in subsequent editions.

**Video.** AFSA is developing a 3–5-minute video to commemorate the 100 years of the Foreign Service. The video will focus on the people of the Foreign Service, while providing the historical context of the events of the past century that have shaped the service.

**Voice of the Foreign Service.** The new edition of *The Voice of the Foreign Service* (history of AFSA) will be released in spring 2024.

**High school essay contest.** AFSA’s national essay contest launched in October 2023 with the following prompt: “Over the past 100 years the Foreign Service has faced a multitude of challenges such as world war, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian disasters, global pandemics, and economic crises. In a 1,000-1,500-word essay please identify what you believe will be the biggest challenge to face the Foreign Service in the future.” Submissions are due on April 1, 2024.

**Member events.** AFSA is planning a host of member events to celebrate the centennial and boost morale. AFSA is planning a “birthday party” at the end of May with an event for local members. A “party-in-a-box” will be sent to AFSA post-reps with ideas for local celebrations at embassies and consulates around the world. The centennial will also be infused into Foreign Service Day activities, which have grown into a week-long campaign.

**Merchandise.** AFSA is selling [centennial-themed merchandise](#) available for purchase on our website.

**Media campaign.** AFSA is planning a media campaign for May 2024, aiming for coverage by national and local media outlets.

**Social media.** AFSA will engage on social media throughout the year. Partners and members will receive social media toolkits to help amplify these messages.

**Partners.** Partners are ready to support AFSA efforts and collaborate on activities to honor the centennial, whether via podcasts (American Diplomat Podcast), in messages to networks (Global Ties US), on a commemorative coin and an AFSA oral history (ADST), or via their programs and events (USGLC, National Museum of American Diplomacy, Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations).

To read more about the AFSA centennial, visit our [centennial website](#).