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January-February 2021 Volume 98, No. 1

Focus on U.S. Diplomacy for the 2020s

Features

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Perspectives

Departments

Marketplace

AFSA NEWS

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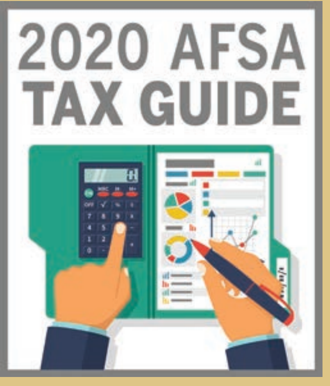


On the Cover—Illustration by Phil Foster.

A Moment of Hope and Possibility

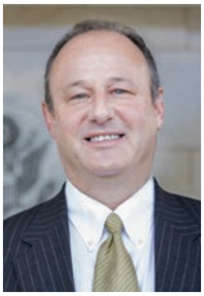
BY ERIC RUBIN

Let me start by offering my warmest congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden, Vice President–elect Kamala Harris and the nominees for senior positions announced to date. There is much to celebrate about our November elections: the largest numerical turnout in U.S. history, the first woman and first woman of color elected vice president, and both domestic and foreign observers confirming a free and fair election.

AFSA is fundamentally nonpartisan and nonpolitical. We do not endorse candidates or political parties. We are committed to representing all our 16,700-plus members, as well as those in the FS community who are not AFSA members. We represent everyone in the entire Foreign Service, regardless of political views.

As both the professional association and labor union for the Foreign Service, AFSA is committed to working constructively with the president Americans have chosen, as well as with his political appointees. I personally have worked for six presidents in the past 35 years and have given all of them my utmost dedication and loyalty. I know that my colleagues in the Foreign Service have done the same. This is who we are, and that is what we do.

This is a moment of hope and possibility for our Service and for our country's conduct of diplomacy and development. The Service has been through a very difficult four years. The administration proposed unprecedented cuts to our funding of up to 35 percent every year. AFSA pushed back. For four years in a row, a bipartisan majority in both houses of Congress resoundingly rejected the cuts and passed strong funding to meet our country's most critical challenges.



Early in this administration, we saw some of our best and most respected senior officers intentionally pushed out of the Service, leaving a vacuum at the top. We saw colleagues' loyalty questioned because of their ethnicity or national origin. We watched the president refer to our nation's oldest government department as "The Deep State Department" while the Secretary of State stood next to him, smiling.

We saw ground lost on the already inadequate state of diversity in the Service, particularly at the senior levels. In some respects, the Foreign Service is now less diverse than it was 30 years ago. We saw respected FS leaders like Ambassador Masha Yovanovitch abandoned by their superiors in the face of hyper-polarization and politicization of U.S. foreign policy. We saw a shortage of overseas positions that has led to painfully slow promotions, and in some cases early retirements, for some of our best people.

We saw the highest percentage of political appointee ambassadorships in modern times, as well as the unprecedented absence of a single career officer serving as a Senate-confirmed assistant secretary of State. Our country's leaders denied themselves the advice and wisdom of our most seasoned and experienced career experts. We firmly believe that it has been not just their loss, but our country's loss as well.

At the same time, real progress has been made in multiple areas in the past four years. We deeply appreciate the pragmatic, positive approach taken by senior agency leaders on issues such as COVID-19 policy, children with special needs, paid parental leave, support for employees who are teleworking and financial support for members of the Service subpoenaed to testify in the impeachment process. There have been many other achievements, too many to name here. And so I end on a positive note.

As we welcome the new president and administration later this month, we want them to know that the Foreign Service is determined to help our country succeed and to carry out the policies of the administration to the best of our abilities.

We hope that our most senior colleagues will be entrusted with the positions they have prepared for decades to assume. A healthy mix of political and career appointees is a critical element in making our system work.

Finally, we hope the new administration will accept AFSA's offer to partner with them, and with Congress, to review needed changes to the Foreign Service, with a view toward modernization and reform wherever it is required. There is much work to be done, and AFSA is ready to do its part.

Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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Picking Up the Pieces

BY SHAWN DORMAN

We welcome the new year and the chance to leave 2020 behind. The incoming administration will take the helm of a diminished State Department and Foreign Service coming off four years of a systematic degrading of public service, diplomacy and professionalism.

Rewind to January 2017. My editor's letter asked: "Will the incoming administration realize that diplomacy is managed and foreign policy implemented by professional public servants, members of the Foreign Service who have sworn an oath to the U.S. Constitution? Hopefully, yes. And, hopefully, they will turn to the professionals staffing the foreign affairs agencies and welcome their input, value their experience, and utilize their deep knowledge and understanding."

They did not. To what end?

That question—posed by then AFSA President Ambassador (ret.) Barbara Stephenson in her December 2017 column, "Time to Ask Why"—remained unanswered while the damage continued. Much of the mentor class was summarily pushed out of the Service. Hiring freezes took a toll, important positions went unfilled and politicization rose to a high point.

Every new administration makes its mark on the U.S. Foreign Service. Some build it up (Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, Diplomacy 3.0); others deconstruct it (the McCarthy era, the Redesign).

Secretaries Colin Powell and later Hillary Clinton prioritized growing the Foreign Service, adding to the ranks to create the ever-elusive "training float."

The Iraq War took away those gains by shifting staff from other posts to fuel that massive effort—a "tax" that still echoes today, as losing posts did not get those positions back and remain understaffed and underfunded.

Exploring the past 100 years in the FSJ digital archive, it becomes clear that ups and downs have been recurring—bouts of "worst times" for the Foreign Service alternate with attempts to reform and reimagine the strained or threatened system. This is one of those latter moments.

The incoming team is pro-diplomacy, pro-development. Some *are* career diplomats. (Some are even AFSA members.) There is a good chance they will pay attention to new ideas. And there is room for optimism that positive reform may be possible and is, indeed, on the horizon.

This is the right time for the *Journal* to highlight ideas for reform. In recent months, major reports offering bold recommendations have been released. In this edition, we take a close look at several of them and summarize proposals being pitched to the new administration by a few heavy-hitter diplomats and scholars.

Our lead story looks at the 10 recommendations from the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center study—"A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century"—through excerpts from a discussion AFSA President Eric Rubin had with the authors of the report: Ambassadors (ret.) Nicholas Burns, Marc Grossman and Marcie Ries.

We summarize three other new reports on boosting U.S. diplomacy, from the Council on Foreign Relations, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Center for American Progress.

In "Recommendations for Action," the Association of Black American Ambassadors offers a set of measures to foster diversity, inclusion and anti-racism at State and USAID.

Freedom House President Michael Abramowitz suggests how U.S. diplomats can address the global weakening of democracy. Ambassador (ret.) Laura Kennedy discusses how to get State back into the critical work of nuclear arms control and nonproliferation.

Ambassador (ret.) Gordon Gray reflects on lessons from the Tunisian revolution that sparked the Arab Spring. And on the 40th anniversary of the release of the Iran hostages, Ambassadors (ret.) John Limbert and Marc Grossman offer an excerpt from their novel, *Believers*. The 2020 Tax Guide rounds out this edition.

We invite you to review the recommendations in the reform articles and offer your own input for the new administration, which will be featured in the March *FSJ*, along with a new piece on risk management from Ambassador (ret.) Ron Neumann and Greg Starr.

We are collecting concise responses to this question: "How can the new administration reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development through the Foreign Service, and what are your specific recommendations?" Please send your note to journal@afsa.org by Jan. 7.

Here's to renewed U.S. diplomacy and development in 2021.

Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

Mike Mansfield and Mongolia

After 27 years of fits and starts, in January 1987 the United States established diplomatic relations with Mongolia, then one of the most isolated countries in the world. This accomplishment was the culmination of efforts by multiple Foreign Service officers over many years, repeatedly frustrated by Soviet and Chinese efforts to prevent recognition, each for their own reasons.

Did you work with Ambassador Mike Mansfield in contacting the government of Mongolia in the 1980s? If so, we would love to hear from you; we want to ensure this piece of diplomatic history is not forgotten.

We have written an article that will be published in the upcoming book *Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia: Nation, Identity, and Culture* (due out in March 2021). Our article frames the establishment of diplomatic relations alongside the beginning of Mongolia's transition from the world's second-oldest communist country to the first attempt to create a democracy and free market economy in Central Asia.

In researching the article, we found that there is an overlooked aspect of the road to recognition—the role of Ambassador Mansfield in Tokyo. His activities are not reflected in declassified files from that period, and the memories of those we have spoken to suggest that other senior U.S. officials may have been involved in 1985 to 1986, and possibly earlier.

If you were one of the those who worked with Amb. Mansfield in this effort in Washington, Tokyo or elsewhere, or if you know of someone who was, we would love to hear from you.

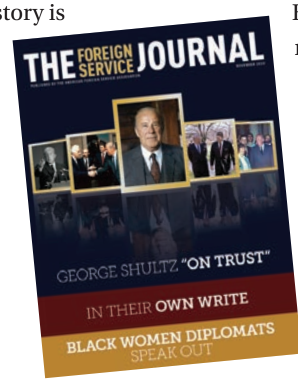
You could help shed light on a footnote to U.S. diplomatic history that looms large in the history of a country that became the first Asian communist country to build a democracy.

Please contact us by email at lake.joe.michael@gmail.com.

Joseph E. Lake
Ambassador, retired
Portland, Oregon
and
Michael Allen Lake
Alexandria, Virginia

Car Tales in Bolivia

On reading the November Reflection ("The Fastest Car in All Bolivia," by George Herrmann), it occurred to me that the Plurinational State of Bolivia would be thrilled to learn that they have a "port on the Pacific Coast," something successive Bolivian governments have sought ever since they lost their coastline to Chile during the late-1800s War of the Pacific. Though Bolivia is one of just two landlocked South American countries, the other being Paraguay, it has negotiated access to and use of ports in Chile and Peru at various times over the years.



When I served in La Paz from 1980 to 1982, our personal vehicles were shipped to post by air. Some weeks after arriving, I picked up my 1980 Chevy at La Paz's airport in El Alto.

A crew from the embassy's general services section dismantled the large wooden crate in which my car had been shipped, and supplied a little gas and a jump-start to enable me to drive it to my house in the Calacoto neighborhood of La Paz.

The trip from El Alto was all downhill, and my Chevy moved along just fine. The problem came when I arrived at the house, which was on level ground. The six-cylinder engine, coupled with an automatic transmission, was insufficiently powerful for the car to surmount the tiny ramp leading over the curb and onto my driveway.

After several attempts, by putting the car in low-low gear and flooring the accelerator, I succeeded in getting it onto the carport, just barely.

An embassy-recommended local mechanic removed enough emission-control equipment from the car's engine to add a modicum of horsepower, sufficient for me to drive around town the rest of my tour—mostly in second gear.

T.J. Morgan
FSO, retired
Asheville, North Carolina

History Repeats Itself

When I read the October Reflection—"Nixon in Moscow, March 1967" by retired SFSO Jonathan Rickert—I had to pinch myself to see if I hadn't dozed off.

The reason: In the spring of 1965 I was vice consul in Helsinki. The embassy received a message from Washington that former Vice President Richard Nixon would be arriving soon with a delegation from Newfoundland, Canada. "Please extend courtesies, etc."

Ambassador Tyler Thompson was not what you would call a big Nixon fan. He appointed his lowest-ranking FSO (me) as control officer, instructing me to keep an eye on them. But as this was a Canadian show, I was not to extend any invitations to visit the embassy.

The Canadian delegation, some six to eight strong, was to consult with Finnish producers of pulp and paper machinery with an eye to supply Newfoundland with equipment for a new facility to produce pulp and paper, using the abundant wood from the province's forests.

In fact, the visit was a sham, to divert attention from an oil refinery project that was being opposed by the environmental movement in Newfoundland. The delegation was to generate publicity about the proposed pulp and paper plant for the folks back home.

Newfoundland Premier Joseph Smallwood led the delegation, and he made a couple of speeches and held a press conference. But the focus of attention was on the delegation's legal counsel, former Vice President Richard Nixon, then practicing law in New York City.

Nixon made sure he generated publicity on behalf of his clients, but he was clearly underemployed. As the embassy liaison, I spent lots of time with the delegation, especially with the former vice president, much of it one on one. Nixon struck up a dialog with me, much as though I were an important person. He quizzed me about my origins, education, posts, etc. He might as well have been interviewing a prospective delegate to the 1968 Republican Convention.

He was not shy about listing his own foreign policy experience. He regaled me with tales of his travels, particularly his experience dealing with the Soviets, inevitably recalling his famous "Kitchen Debate" with Nikita Khrushchev at a U.S. trade show in Moscow in the late 1950s.

"That reminds me," he said. "Since we're so close, I wonder if it would be possible to extend our trip and make a visit to Moscow? I think we could afford a few more days, but of course we'd have to get visas on short notice. That could be a hitch."

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As luck would have it, I had an "assistant vice consul" in my office. He spoke Ukrainian from birth and was the embassy's informal contact with the Soviet embassy in Helsinki. His bosses were keen to have close contact with the Soviets and were willing to extend unlimited representational funds to this end. Unsurprisingly, so were the KGB elements in the Soviet embassy.

This had led to a shameless series of social events involving the two Soviet consular officers and the two of us. We even exchanged dinners in each other's homes. We introduced our Soviet friends to American bourbon and gin. They brought quantities of vodka and champagne. Sometimes there was food, too.

We were all supposed to be consular officers, so we sometimes discussed consular matters. As the drinks flowed, we assured each other we would grant visas to the most unlikely prospective visitors to our respective countries with lightning speed.

So I reminded my dear colleague of this arrangement when I appeared in his office with six to eight passports and fully completed visa applications.

He was as good as his word, and the very next day I proudly presented Messrs. Smallwood, Nixon and company with their passports, fully stamped for a 30-day visit to the USSR.

Mr. Nixon's luck, however, did not hold in Moscow, where his request to visit his old pal Khrushchev was turned down flat. He had no better luck two years later, as described in Jonathan Rickert's amusing recollection.

And they say history never repeats itself!

Harrison Sherwood
FSO, retired
Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, England

This Is *Still* My Father's DACOR

John Bradshaw's article in the September *FSJ* ("This Is Not Your Father's DACOR," AFSA News) caught my eye.

My husband, son and I recently spent four days in the guest rooms of this historic treasure. My late father, Ambassador Sheldon T. Mills, was an early member of DACOR. He championed its raison d'etre with his Foreign Service colleagues and encouraged us to become members at the outset of our own Foreign Service careers.

He would have been pleased to see DACOR opening to the wider foreign affairs community. So, in a sense, DACOR *is* "still my father's DACOR."

Situated at 1801 F St. NW in Washington, D.C., and built in 1825, the DACOR Bacon House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (shown on some district maps as Ringgold-Carroll House). It boasts a range of treasures from paintings and carpets to teapots and chandeliers.

The DACOR Bacon House is a living testament to American history, culture and diplomacy. Its central location offers easy access to the National Mall and its museums and monuments, as well as restaurants.

Without sacrificing any of the building's historic ambience, our stay was made highly satisfying by modern bathrooms, comfortable beds, coffee makers, a microwave and quiet surroundings.

If one seeks historical and cultural enrichment, we highly recommend a stay at DACOR Bacon House.

Linda Mills Sipprelle
FSO, retired
Princeton, New Jersey

Submit letters to the editor: journal@afsa.org

LETTERS-PLUS

RESPONSES TO DECEMBER FOCUS, "A Conversation with Ambassador Edward J. Perkins: 2020 Recipient of the AFSA Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy"

Remembering My Mentor and Dear Friend

BY STACY D. WILLIAMS

Many of you have learned of the passing of Ambassador Edward J. Perkins in November. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. noted that longevity has its place. Amb. Perkins lived an incredible life during his 92 years with us.

Some point to the need to mourn the loss of this gentle giant. I, in turn, see the importance of celebrating the gain we received through his wisdom, experience, presence and the profound impact he made on all of us. He was a godfather, colleague and friend to me for much of my adult life.

In life we must recognize certain symbols. I am from Shreveport, Louisiana. Amb. Perkins grew up on a farm in Monroe, Louisiana, about 1.5 hours from my home. We agreed that from where we started in life, it was highly unlikely that we would both enjoy careers at the State Department. My childhood home's numerical address was 1407. I sent many holiday cards to Amb. Perkins at his Washington, D.C., apartment, which was also 1407.

But the most profound connection was that I was born in 1973—the same year that Amb. Perkins was busy setting the stage to establish the Thursday Luncheon Group as a founding member. As I celebrate my 50th milestone in a few years, so will TLG.


COURTESY OF STACY D. WILLIAMS

Ambassador Edward J. Perkins and Stacy Williams celebrate the Thursday Luncheon Group's 45th anniversary at the State Department in 2018.

In 2007, TLG honored Amb. Perkins—author, dynamic leader, mentor, motivator, promoter of excellence, transformational diplomat—with its Pioneer Award. It was given in recognition of his outstanding service as a professional diplomat and his leadership as ambassador to South Africa and to the United Nations during times of great crisis.

The award also recognized his championing, as the first African American Director General of the Foreign Service, the creation of a Department of State that reflects the diversity of America.

And TLG saluted the ambassador's service at the University of Oklahoma, where he continued to cultivate and mentor a new generation of foreign affairs professionals.

When I first joined the State Department in 1997, my many mentors within TLG always pointed to two successful and consummate professionals who came before them: Career Ambassador Terence A. Todman and Ambassador Edward J. Perkins. Little did I know that I would be fortunate enough to have both men take a real interest in me. They were always present and took an active role in guiding my efforts to forge a successful career path. They supported my multifaceted initiatives to elevate and advance the goals of the Thursday Luncheon Group as the group's president.

I first met Amb. Perkins shortly after the release of his autobiography, *Mr. Ambassador: Warrior for Peace* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). My job within TLG was to greet him at the airport, transport him to the Army Navy Club and, the following day, drive him to Fort Myer, Virginia, for his book signing. As any curious individual would do, I read every page of his book in advance of our encounter and learned that he had served as ambassador to Liberia, South Africa, the United Nations and Australia.

I learned about his work as Director General, initiating the Thomas R. Pickering Fellowship to increase diversity within the Foreign Service as prescribed by the Foreign Service Act of 1980. This program served, in turn, as the model for establishment of the Charles Rangel program. For many years, Amb. Perkins was always pres-

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Stacy D. Williams is chair of the Diversity Council in the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. He has served as president of the Thursday Luncheon Group.

ent to welcome each group of Pickering and Rangel Fellows during annual receptions co-hosted by TLG and the Association of Black American Ambassadors.

What captured my attention was the fact that when he was assigned as ambassador to South Africa, apartheid had a firm hold on the country; but shortly after his departure from Pretoria, apartheid ended. Speaking with him, I tried to connect the idea that he was responsible in some profound way for this paradigm shift within the country.

He simply said, "I had a great team. We had a mission and had some success," and then he went on to a different subject. That was a profound insight for me, because I learned that President Ronald Reagan had given Amb. Perkins the rare opportunity to create policy on the ground given the delicate situation in the country and heightened interest in the U.S. Congress.

My meeting with Amb. Perkins would be the beginning of a remarkable relationship that informed my decision to become a servant leader as Amb. Perkins modeled in his own life's work. My mission has been, and continues to be, to build on the solid foundation he established. One of my proudest moments occurred during TLG's 40th anniversary event when, in his remarks, Amb. Perkins recognized my mother and acknowledged my work as TLG president: https://bit.ly/Perkins-video.

I hope this short narrative conveys my appreciation for Amb. Perkins' targeted efforts to invest in others, his interest in building strong societies as a public servant, and his commitment to excellence in international affairs. I am, indeed, most grateful for having shared many meaningful years with this giant of a figure who was recognized this year with the American Foreign Service Association's Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy. ■

Remembering Ambassador Perkins in His Hometown

BY NIELS MARQUARDT

Kudos to AFSA both for honoring Ambassador Edward J. Perkins this year with a Lifetime Achievement Award, and for the wonderful interview with him (December *FSJ*). With his sad passing on Nov. 7, it was timely and fitting to see him so honored as the trailblazer he was.

I am writing now to make readers aware of activities intended to honor and remember Amb. Perkins here in Portland, Oregon, his former hometown. He graduated from Portland's Jefferson High School and first attended college at the city's Lewis & Clark College.

Several months ago, I was privileged to speak by telephone with him, to make sure that he was personally on board with our efforts here to secure his local legacy. He enthusiastically endorsed both ideas we discussed.

The first was to create an "Ambassador Edward J. Perkins Speaker Series" at Lewis & Clark. We aim to offer annual lectures in his honor by renowned international affairs scholars and practitioners.

Lewis & Clark is a small, liberal arts college with a focus on international affairs, diversity and inclusion, and the environment and sustainability. It also offers one of the oldest and strongest overseas study programs of any college in America.

At present, about one-third of Lewis & Clark's 2,000 students are people of color, representing significant progress since Ed Perkins' pathbreaking, early days on campus!

For more detailed information about this initiative, and to make tax-deductible contributions online, go to: https://bit.ly/LewisandClark-initiative.

The second idea we discussed was renaming Jefferson High School after Amb. Perkins. While we are not advocating this, it seems obvious that having Oregon's only majority African American high school named after a lifetime slaveholder—however distinguished he may be otherwise—may be offensive to some.

It, therefore, seems quite possible that the Portland Public School Board may decide to rename the school. If they do, there is a strong argument for renaming it after the man who is arguably the school's most distinguished graduate, Amb. Perkins.

Any reader who wishes to register support for this idea may send a short email to PPS Board Member Amy Kohnstamm: akohnstamm@pps.net.

With these efforts we hope that Amb. Perkins' remarkable life and distinguished career will also be remembered here in Oregon, where so much of it began. ■

Niels Marquardt is the first diplomat-in-residence at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. During a 33-year diplomatic career, he served as ambassador twice.

Find the interview with Ambassador Perkins, conducted shortly before his death, in the December *Journal*. For his obituary, see page 86.

TALKING POINTS

The Transition Begins

The head of President-elect Joe Biden's State Department Transition Team "is pushing to revitalize the agency and make it more diverse," NPR reported on Nov. 18.

Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield leads the State Department Transition Team. She has also been selected as the incoming Biden administration pick for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, which will be a Cabinet position.

Ambassadors (ret.) Thomas-Greenfield and William Burns argue in an article for the November/December *Foreign Affairs* that "the United States needs a top-to-bottom diplomatic surge. … The Trump administration's unilateral diplomatic disarmament is a reminder that it is much easier to break than to build. The country doesn't have the luxury of waiting for a generational replenishment, marking time as new recruits slowly work their way up the ranks."

Among other familiar names on the transition team: Ambassadors (ret.) Nancy McEldowney, Michael Guest and Roberta Jacobson. On Dec. 3, Kamala Harris announced Amb. McEldowney as the pick for national security adviser to the vice president. Heading the USAID transition team is Linda Etim, former USAID assistant administrator.

"The most important confidence-building step will be to have a president with a Secretary of State who trusts the professionals and empowers them to do their jobs, instead of a daily dose of contempt," Thomas Countryman told the *Los Angeles Times*. Countryman, the former top arms control official, was dismissed at the same time as Amb. Thomas-Greenfield at the start of the Trump administration.

GETTY IMAGES/CHANDAN KHANNA

Antony Blinken, President-elect Joe Biden's nominee for Secretary of State, delivers remarks at the Nov. 24 event in Wilmington, Delaware, where the president-elect announced his nominees for Cabinet-level positions in diplomacy and national security.

On Nov. 23, the General Services Administration informed President-elect Biden that the formal transition process could begin.

Biden Promises New Foreign Policy Era

"Together, these public servants will restore America globally, its global leadership and its moral leadership," Biden said as he introduced his national security team to the nation on Nov. 24 in Wilmington, Delaware.

"It's a team that reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it. Once again sit at the head of the table. Ready to confront our adversaries and not reject our allies. Ready to stand up for our values."

Biden's national security nominees promised changes from the past four years.

"We have to proceed with equal measures of humility and confidence," Antony Blinken, Biden's nominee to be Secretary of State, said at the event. "Humility because, as the president-elect said, we can't solve all the world's problems alone. We need to be working with other countries. We need their cooperation. We need their partnership. But also confidence, because America at its best still has a greater ability than any other country on earth to bring others together to meet the challenges of our time."

"And that's where the men and women of the State Department, Foreign Service officers, Civil Service, that's where they come in," added Blinken, who served as Deputy Secretary of State from 2015 to

Contemporary Quote

"The team meets this moment, this team behind me. They embody my core beliefs that America is strongest when it works with its allies. Collectively, this team has secured some of the most defining national security and diplomatic achievements in recent memory, made possible through decades of experience working with our partners. That's how we truly keep America safe without engaging in needless military conflicts, and our adversaries in check, and terrorists at bay."

—President-elect Joe Biden, announcing his national security team on Nov. 24.

2017. "I've witnessed their passion, their energy, their courage up close. I've seen what they do to keep us safe, to make us more prosperous. I've seen them add luster to a word that deserves our respect, diplomacy. If confirmed, it will be the honor of my life to help guide them."

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield is Biden's pick for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations (which will again be elevated to a Cabinet position). "On this day, I'm thinking about the American people, my fellow career diplomats and public servants around the world," she said at the press conference. "I want to say to you, 'America is back. Multilateralism is back. Diplomacy is back.'"

"The challenges we face—a global pandemic, the global economy, the global climate crisis, mass migration and extreme poverty, social justice—are unrelenting and interconnected, but they're not unresolvable if America is leading the way," she added.

Biden, who has pledged to rejoin the Paris Agreement on climate change, nominated former Secretary of State John Kerry as a special envoy on climate. Kerry will be a Cabinet-level official and will sit on the National Security Council, underscoring the Biden administration's commitment to fighting climate change.

"To end this crisis, the whole world must come together," Kerry said. "You're right to rejoin Paris on day one. And you're right to recognize that Paris alone is not enough. At the global meeting in Glasgow, one year from now, all nations must raise ambition together, or we will all fail together. And failure is not an option."

Vice President–elect Kamala Harris said a top priority of the Biden administration will be to get the COVID-19 pandemic under control.

"Our challenge here is a necessary foundation for restoring and advancing our leadership around the world," she said. "And we are ready for that work. We will need to reassemble and renew America's alliances, rebuild and strengthen the national security and foreign policy institutions that keep us safe and advance our nation's interests."

Biden also nominated Jake Sullivan, who served previously as director of policy planning at State and as national security adviser to Vice President Biden, as his national security adviser.

Scaling Back Pay-to-Play Ambassadorships?

Senator Tim Kaine (D-Va.) has introduced a bill—S4849, the Ambassador Oversight and Transparency Act—that seeks to curb the number of political appointees being slotted into ambassadorships, *Foreign Policy* magazine reported on Oct. 26.

"While our country has had some excellent ambassadors from outside the ranks of the career Foreign Service, over the past few decades, an increasing number of nominees have few credentials but have made large campaign contributions," Kaine told the magazine.

"This bill will require presidents to justify their noncareer nominees by citing their specific relevant skills and allow greater oversight and accountability of these appointees."

Former diplomats and experts who track ambassadorships told *Foreign Policy* that "the bill would represent one of the most significant reforms in four decades."

Out of President Donald Trump's 189 ambassadorial appointments, 81 (or 43 percent) have been political, according to the AFSA Ambassador Tracker.

Between 1953 and 2008, 32 percent of ambassador appointees were political, according to research by Ambassador (ret.) Dennis Jett.

Kaine's bill would require the State Department to publish financial disclosures on political donations going back 10 years, *Foreign Policy* reports.

Presidential administrations would also be required to outline an ambassadorial candidate's language skills and knowledge of the country to which he or she is appointed.

AAD Advocates 13 Steps on Diversity

In a Dec. 1 press release signed by Ambassadors (ret.) Thomas Pickering and Ronald Neumann, the American Academy of Diplomacy urged the State Department to take "specific steps" to "foster a climate of inclusion, increase accountability and transform the U.S. diplomatic service to a more competitive service truly representing the nation." The steps are, in summary:

1. Establish a senior-level (assistant secretary or above) Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, reporting directly to the Secretary of State, with adequate budget and staff to coordinate action across the department.

2. Require a deputy assistant secretary (DAS) in each bureau and the deputy chief of mission (DCM) at post to be responsible for diversity and inclusion in coordination with the CDIO.

3. Add "advancement of diversity and inclusion" to the core precepts for evaluation and promotion.

4. Explore the use of gender/ethnic neutral anonymous procedures by promotion panels.

5. Include "significant advancement of diversity and inclusion" as criteria for Senior Performance Pay and Presidential Awards.

6. Include specific language on officer's record of actively promoting diversity and inclusion in mandatory 360 review process for all assignments for supervisory officers.

7. Strengthen accountability measures for supervisors and managers.

8. Require bureaus, DCMs and the D Committees to report (twice a year to the Secretary via the CDIO) the demographic data on all candidates considered and chosen for key positions.

9. Include an assessment of the nominee's track record in advancing diversity and inclusion in the Certificates of Competency required for all ambassadors.

10. Establish an internal certificate of competency for DAS/DCM/principal officer and other senior positions that includes an assessment of leadership skills in promoting diversity and inclusion.

11. Convene a group of senior FSOs who began their careers as Pickering and Rangel Fellows to develop proposals to address internal misperceptions about the Fellowship program.

12. Maintain a 50 percent increase in the annual number of Pickering and Rangel Fellows.

13. Ensure that the assessor teams in the Board of Examiners have participants from underrepresented communities.

The detailed AAD proposals follow on the association's June 9 presentation of five general recommendations.

The State Department's now widely acknowledged failure to cultivate a truly diverse workforce was the subject of a January 2020 Government Accountability Office report (GAO-20-237).

It was also the topic of an Oct. 29 virtual panel discussion at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy chaired by ISD Director Ambassador (ret.) Barbara Bodine (see https://bit.ly/state-diversity).

50 Years Ago

Toward A Modern Diplomacy

The first stage of the reform movement within the foreign affairs community is complete.

The process began in 1968 with the publication by AFSA of "Toward a Modern Diplomacy." Secretaries Rogers and Macomber have responded with great perception and courage to this unprecedented desire for self reform. The 13 task forces have studied the problems faced by the foreign affairs community in a new decade and have submitted their recommendations to the Secretary. The first phase of reform is realized; the second, and more difficult, is about to begin.

The second phase requires translation of the task forces' recommendations into practice. It will not be easy. Fundamental changes are always disconcerting and sometimes even painful; indeed the level of pain may mirror the success of reform.

—Foreign Service Journal *Editorial of the same title, February 1971* FSJ.

U.S.-Europe Relationship Forever Changed?

In a Nov. 16 interview, the European Union's top diplomat, Joseph Borrell, told *Time* magazine that four years of turmoil under President Donald Trump "has left Europeans with a lasting sense that U.S. support is not necessarily dependable."

"You will never rewind history," said Borrell, the E.U.'s vice president and chief of foreign affairs. "Trump has been a kind of awakening. And I think we should stay awake. We cannot say 'oh Trump is no longer there, we can go back to our previous state of mind.'"

Time reported that while most of the 27 E.U. leaders have sent public messages of goodwill to the incoming Biden administration, E.U. officials behind the scenes "have also warned of the need to remain cautious about the United States, given that Trump's trenchant nationalist views clearly have strong support among Americans."

"What led to the election of Donald Trump four years ago remains," French Minister of State for European Affairs Clément Beaune said Nov. 13 at the Paris Peace Forum, a virtual meeting of world leaders and diplomats. "This kind of discomfort of globalization, this fear of China, this concern about multilateralism, remain."

Borrell told *Time* he believes that divisions between the United States and Europe "could come to a head" over Iran and China early in the Biden presidency.

While President-elect Biden has said he will rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Borrell said that will be a challenge, in part because signatories will be wary of a future U.S. administration leaving the pact again.

Further, a political risk consultancy firm, the Eurasia Group, said in a note to investors on Nov. 17 that the Biden administration will find it difficult to abandon the stiff sanctions President Trump imposed on Iran.

The U.S. and Asia

On Nov. 20, the State Department Office of Policy Planning released "The Elements of the China Challenge," a 74-page report on China.

"The Trump administration achieved a fundamental break with the conventional wisdom," the paper's introduction states. "It concluded that the CCP's [Chinese Communist Party's] resolute conduct and self-professed goals require the United States and other countries to revise assumptions and develop a new strategic doctrine to address the primacy and magnitude of the China challenge."

The report consists of three sections analyzing China's conduct, the intellectual sources of China's conduct and China's vulnerabilities, as well as a short concluding section, "Securing Freedom," which outlines 10 steps the United States should take to meet the challenge.

"Meeting the China challenge requires the United States to return to the fundamentals," the paper argues, including rejuvenation of U.S. constitutional democracy, strong alliances and development of "sturdy policies that stand above bureaucratic squabbles and interagency turf battles and transcend short-term election cycles. The United States' overarching aim should be to secure freedom."

Meanwhile, President Trump snubbed Asian counterparts by failing to participate in two key Asia-related virtual summits in mid-November.

Neither Trump nor any Cabinet-level officials participated in the recent Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the East Asian Summit. China signed a trade pact with 14 other Asian countries that same weekend.

Derek Mitchell, former U.S. ambassador to Myanmar, told *Washington Post* columnist Josh Rogin: "It's really a travesty, and it undermines all the Trump administration's pretensions of having a thoughtful and strategic approach to the China challenge. If you are seeking to demonstrate you are a resident power in Asia in competition with China, you need to act like it."

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Cameron Woodworth and Shawn Dorman.

Site of the Month
Our World in Data: ourworldindata.org

Our World in Data

From poverty and disease to climate change and inequality, making progress against the world's largest problems is the focus of Our World in Data.

Operated by researchers at the United Kingdom's University of Oxford and the Global Change Data Lab, the website features 3,100 charts across nearly 300 topics. All are free and open source. The site covers trends in health, food provision, income growth and distribution, violence, rights, wars, energy use, education and environmental changes, among others.

Our World in Data created a database on testing for COVID-19 that is used by the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the White House. The site features 207 country profiles featuring coronavirus statistics that are updated every day.

"We believe that a key reason why we fail to achieve the progress we are capable of is that we do not make enough use of this existing research and data: the important knowledge is often stored in inaccessible databases, locked away behind paywalls and buried under jargon in academic papers," according to the team behind the website. "The goal of our work is to make the knowledge on the big problems accessible and understandable."

THE FUTURE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

A Discussion with Nicholas Burns, Marc Grossman & Marcie Ries

PHIL FOSTER

AFSA was delighted to host a conversation on Nov. 19 with the co-authors of a new report from the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, "A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century." With 476 people attending on Zoom, AFSA President Eric Rubin facilitated the discussion with Ambassadors (ret.) Nicholas Burns, Marc Grossman and Marcie Ries, who presented the 10 recommendations made in the report and then took questions for about 45 minutes. The speakers gave credit to Ambassador (ret.) Nancy McEldowney as a big part of the thinking behind the study. She was invited to join the Biden transition before the report was completed. The following is excerpted from the transcript of the event. Find the entire discussion at https://bit.ly/FutureFS-event.

AFSA President Eric Rubin: Welcome. We're going to have over 400 members joining us, and that's fantastic. We're very lucky to have with us, presenting the key conclusions of the report and taking questions from our members, three of our most distinguished veteran diplomats who have been leading this effort.

They are **Ambassador Nicholas Burns**, the Goodman family professor of the practice of diplomacy and international relations at the Kennedy School at Harvard, a retired Foreign Service officer and former under secretary of State for political affairs, former ambassador to NATO and to Greece, and a real thinker about the Foreign Service.

The second is **Ambassador Marc Grossman**, currently with The Cohen Group in Washington, who also served as under secretary of State for political affairs, Director General of the Foreign Service and director of human resources, assistant secretary of State for European affairs and U.S. ambassador to Turkey, as well as our special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Our third co-chair is **Ambassador Marcie Ries**, a senior fellow at the Belfer Center's Future of Diplomacy Project and a senior adviser at the Foreign Service Institute's School of Leadership and Management, who served for 37 years in the Foreign Service and is a three-time chief of mission.

This is a moment in history where we have a chance to rebuild, reshape, redirect, reform the Foreign Service for the 21st century. Some might argue we're 20 years late. I would agree with that assessment, but I also believe that better late than never is a very important principle in life, and it's time to get going on this. And I believe most of our members agree.

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: What we want to do today is present our argument that the United States needs to invest more in the State Department and lift up diplomacy. Let me just tell you a little bit why we conducted this project. We've been concerned for years that the State Department is underfunded; that it hasn't had, maybe especially in recent years, adequate leadership; that diplomacy in effect has been sidelined since 9/11 by respective administrations, not just the Trump administration; and that if we could do something to help the current Foreign Service officers, specialists and civil servants, we wanted to do that.

We argue in this report that the United States needs a stronger Foreign Service, a more high-performing Foreign Service. In other words, a more effective Foreign Service. And we also argue that as President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President–elect Kamala Harris prepare to take office, diplomacy is going to be a more important tool in the American national security arsenal.

If we have to end the war in Afghanistan, American diplomats will end the war at the negotiating table as they are trying to do now. If we're going to deal with these very difficult competitor, adversarial countries, China and Russia, we're going to have to have diplomats at the table, in our embassies and consulates deployed to deal with them.

Once in a generation, you have to look within yourself in a service like the military or intelligence community, or like the State Department, the Foreign Service and Civil Service. And you've got to be honest about your failures, honest about what's not working. And you've got to commit to reform.

We held 40 workshops and met with more than 200 people. We talked to lots of active-duty Foreign Service officers at the entry level, at the midlevel, at the senior level; we talked to specialists, we talked to civil servants, and we talked with high-level military and intelligence colleagues. And, of course, we've reached out to members of Congress, Republican members of the Senate and House, Democratic members of the Senate and House, and staff members of the important committees. We met with senior State Department officials; with Secretaries Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Hillary Clinton; with two former CIA directors; and two former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. We learned much from all of them. We believe there's a possibility of a bipartisan consensus that State needs to be strengthened.

We wanted to reach out to citizens, too, because after all, everything we do in government is on behalf of the citizens of the United States. And we met with more than 800 people in World Affairs Council meetings.

ACTION #1—REDEFINE THE MISSION

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: Recommendation number one: The new president, Joe Biden, and the new Congress, Republicans and Democrats, should work together on a bipartisan basis to define a new 21st-century mission and a new mandate for the Foreign and Civil Service.

We think the State Department should be restored to play a major part in policymaking in Washington, D.C. State's been sidelined in many respects from that role. The State Department, our embassies and consulates—275 of them around the world—are the lead executors of any administration's foreign policy. Also restore the role of our ambassadors as the president's personal representative and the leader of the country team in embassies around the world, because that role is being undercut in many parts of the world.

ACTION #2—REVISE THE FOREIGN SERVICE ACT

Ambassador Marc Grossman: The second recommendation is to revise the Foreign Service Act. I'll give you five reasons that, in the end, we decided that it was time now to see if we could get a new Foreign Service Act.

First, 40 years is a long time since 1980. We honor the people who brought that Foreign Service Act of 1980 into being, but there's been an enormous amount of change since then.

Second, there are principles that we believe should move unchanged from the act from 40 years ago to today—a career in Foreign Service, a nonpolitical Foreign Service, criteria for ambassadors, up-or-out, worldwide availability, peer review, all the things that are so important to that 1980 Act.

Third, we listened carefully to our colleagues in the military, who said: "If you don't get this in writing, if it isn't in legislation, you will never succeed at doing this over the long term."

Fourth, this is the foundation for so many of the other recommendations that we've made.

And fifth, very importantly, we've found a very great reservoir of people on Capitol Hill and in our community, as well, who said: "Let's think about this. Let's think about it seriously. Let's see if we can try this going forward."

ACTION #3—CHANGE THE CULTURE

Ambassador Marc Grossman: To change the culture, you all know, is a hard one. This is the one that takes the most effort; but again, I go back to the conversations we had inside our community and with our military colleagues who said, unless you're prepared to have a brutal self-examination, the rest of the reforms don't happen.

The first thing we start with are all the good things about the Foreign Service culture: the patriotism, the service, the sacrifice, families. And those are the really great things we have inside our culture; but you all know there are a lot of ways that our culture gets in the way of doing the best job. It's about telling truth to power. And it's about telling the truth to ourselves. It's about finding ways to be high-performing, and there's a whole list of them in the report. We think that that change now has to come, and it has to come from self-examination.

One more point about culture. There's a lot of conversation about risk. There's risk that's physical and there's risk that's policy. We want to make sure there's a distinction. The question is how do you get people to do more on the risk side on policy? In terms of the question of physical risk, it's one of the reasons we support the effort of the American Academy of Diplomacy to change the Accountability Review Board so that people can get out and do the job that they signed up to do.

ACTION #4—DIVERSITY

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: We have a fourth recommendation, that diversity has to be a first-order strategic priority. There has to be a relentless focus on diversity. We heard more anger about diversity, more genuine passion and a desire for reform, particularly on the part of our younger officers, on this than on any other issue. The situation is, quite frankly, unacceptable. We have failed to produce a Foreign and Civil Service that looks like America and the great tradition of our multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious society.

Here are some data points to illustrate that. If you look at the Senior Foreign Service now and look at the percentage of African American officers in the current Senior Foreign Service and the percentage of Latino and Latina Americans in the Senior Foreign Service, it really hasn't changed much in 20 years. We have not made progress; both groups [are] underrepresented.

Speaking at the Nov. 19 event, clockwise from top left: Ambassadors Eric Rubin, Nick Burns, Marc Grossman and Marcie Ries.

President Trump appointed 189 ambassadors over the last four years. Five of them have been African American. During President Obama's administration with Joe Biden, 46 of their ambassadors were African Americans. During George W. Bush's administration, 44 of his ambassadors were African American. We've moved backward in a very dramatic way.

We are recommending that the next Secretary of State and next Deputy Secretary of State take this on as their direct responsibility.

What also really stood out to us were all the affinity groups in the State Department. These are employee-led groups. They form on their own, and they're a repository of really good ideas, of best practices, of innovation. They're incredibly impressive people. They had a big impact on us. I remember one of them said in a very long three-hour meeting we had with them, "Structural problems require structural reforms." So we're proposing structural reforms.

We believe promotion from the entry level to the midlevel, from the midlevel to the senior level, from senior level to DCM and ambassador should be dependent on and contingent on, "Has this person mentored someone? Has this person actually worked to advance the cause of diversity in 21st-century America and in the State Department?" If you have, you can be promoted. If you haven't, you should not be promoted.

ACTION #5—PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ambassador Marcie Ries: This whole project is aimed at having a Foreign Service that's at the top of its game. So, of course, we had to give some attention to professionalization, to education. When Colin Powell came to the State Department, he talked about how in his 35-year career, he had had seven years of education and training, and he was fond of asking others around him:

"So how much training did you have?" They would all say, "Well, except for language training, maybe a couple of months." This is just not acceptable anymore. We need a lot more. We need to develop the intellectual capital of the entire State Department.

We really need career-long education for everyone. It should include the kind of tradecraft and short-term training that we have now, but it should encompass a larger body of knowledge. There should be more focus on current and future challenges, on strategic thinking, on leadership and, of course, on improving our diplomatic skills and tradecraft.

ACTION #6—MODERNIZE THE PERSONNEL SYSTEM

Ambassador Marc Grossman: The sixth recommendation is making the personnel system more modern and more flexible. The 15 percent float for training and transit—that would allow enough people to get the kind of education that Marcie has just talked about, get people to that education, and let them stay there—that's a 2,000-person increase in the Foreign Service. We figured that's about a $400 million expense over three years. That's an extremely important foundational idea, and that's where we start.

We then said to ourselves: "Well, there's two things you have to ask yourself. One is let's get the right balance between service in Washington and service overseas. More Foreign Service people should be serving abroad than in Washington, D.C.; and let's see if we can cut down the size of some of these enormous embassies that were created as a result of the land wars."

We would recommend that after the 15 percent, the Service then grow again between 1,400 and 1,800 people. That number [of new FS members] would be focused on people who do IT, people in the medical field, OMSs.

ACTION #7—MIDLEVEL ENTRY

Ambassador Marc Grossman: We have recommended a defined midlevel entry program to try to get people into the State Department who have the specialized skills that we need to be a high-performing Foreign Service: people in AI, people who do all kinds of expert things that are required today for the country to serve its citizens.

Start small—25 people in the first year, 25 in a second year, 50 people in a third—and then evaluate how you're doing and if you want to go forward, and have a cap of 500 midlevel entrants total. If you consider that against the larger Foreign Service, we think that's manageable. We recommend very strict criteria—nonpolitical, pass rigorous tests and, extremely important as well, worldwide availability at entry.

Another reason to do a midlevel entry program is diversity. Even if you hired many new diverse people at the entry level, you can't get there until 20 or 25 years from now. One of the things that we are trying to do here is find the right balance in today's conversation about midlevel entry.

ACTION #8—ESTABLISH A DIPLOMATIC RESERVE CORPS

Ambassador Marc Grossman: Establish a Diplomatic Reserve Corps—again, not a new idea, but one we think whose time has come for a couple of reasons. One is to help with the surge capacity and emergencies all around the world; and second, to again find a way to bring in the specialized expertise that we think is required today. There's a third reason I'm really attracted to it, and that's the reciprocal aspect of it, which is to say that people who came to the Service, who came to the State Department, did a deployment, came for their two weeks, would go back into their home communities and say, "People at the State Department, are serving the citizens of the United States of America."

We think about a 1,000-person Reserve Corps, so that you can have a way to think through a better personnel system, ways to bring people in and out [that] would enhance the capacity of the service to serve the American people.

ACTION #9—CREATE A STRONGER, MORE NONPARTISAN FOREIGN SERVICE

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: Our ninth recommendation is to preserve a resolutely nonpartisan Service and to increase opportunities for Foreign and Civil Service officers in the key ambassadorial and senior-level positions.

The Department of State has more political appointees inside the department than any other U.S. Cabinet agency. As you all know, we're one of the smaller U.S. Cabinet agencies. Of our 23 assistant secretaries of State—and they are the critical ambassadorial-level line managers of American diplomacy—not a single one of them right now is a Senate-confirmed career professional.

We think that 75 percent of our assistant secretaries should be career Foreign Service and Civil Service officers. Right now, it's zero. The position of under secretary of State for political affairs should always be a career Foreign Service or Civil Service officer. We think one of the other five under secretary of State positions should be a career officer so that the Foreign and Civil Service are present in the leadership of the Department of State.

On ambassadorial appointments, I think everybody here knows the post–World War II ratio is that about 70 percent of our ambassadors come from the career ranks, and about 30 [percent

are] political appointees. Our view is that the Foreign and Civil Service should be 90 percent of the ambassadors of the United States of America.

As we have test-marketed this, we've been called lots of names. Both political parties are invested in this. It's going to be the hardest recommendation to accomplish.

We're the only country in the world that has this system. To make it easier for our political masters in both parties, we said: "Look, you can achieve these targets by 2025—over the next five years." We thought that might make it a little bit easier. It didn't really increase the welcome that we received on this! We're going to fight for this. We think this is really important.

ACTION #10—FIND NEW SPIRIT IN A NEW NAME

Ambassador Marcie Ries: We did quiz people on this one, and, actually, even we were surprised at how widespread the feeling was that it was really a great idea. The term "Foreign Service" comes from the 19th century. And when we started thinking about it and talking to people in the business world, when you want to make very significant changes in an organization, they advise that changing the name is very important, because it signals major transformation.

We came to the "United States Diplomatic Service," because that puts the United States first; it tells what we're about, the practice of diplomacy; and the third word is "Service," which certainly describes what we do.

Q&A

OPENING THE FS ACT

AFSA President Eric Rubin: Let's turn to some questions. One set of issues that has been raised by our members is: What is the risk in reopening the Foreign Service Act of 1980? Would you lose substantive structural elements of the Foreign Service that you want to preserve?

Ambassador Marc Grossman: In our recommendation was a long list of the things that we would keep from the 1980 Act. And in there are fully funded pensions. We're trying to preserve what it is that is most important.

It [also] says to keep AFSA as the primary labor management bargaining agent of people in the Foreign Service. If AFSA retains its very important role, and among the reasons I paid dues all my life was to have it be that way, that is an important protection for people. Is this going to be a big debate? Yes, it will be.

But the defense of it then needs to come way to the top of the agenda, because I just don't think sitting back and saying, "We're not going to change anything because I want my 20 years" [is acceptable]. We have to change the terms of the arguments here, so that we get up and start speaking up for ourselves.

ENGAGING CONGRESS

AFSA President Eric Rubin: Another set of questions we had was over how Congress would fit into this picture. Do you see a strategy to get a large number of members of both houses engaged on this?

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: We do. One way to think about these 10 recommendations is in the short term. Even in the transition or the first three months of a Biden administration, there are things the new president can do. He can raise the budget, which he needs to do. He can appoint a greater number of Foreign Service officers to senior positions. He can appoint a greater number of African American and Latino officers and women to senior positions. He can put State back into the center of the policy process at the National Security Council.

MIDLEVEL ENTRY

AFSA President Eric Rubin: We have a bunch of questions about the proposals for midlevel lateral entry. Here is a good one: "On one hand, the report argues for U.S. Diplomatic Service, but then seems to concentrate on subject matter expertise in many fields—including from a possible midlevel program as well as a diplomatic reserve—but not explicitly about diplomacy. It's much easier to find expertise in technical fields than to develop diplomats and leaders. It seems that our pressing shortage and critical need is in diplomatic, not technical skills." Where is that balance between skills as diplomats and technical skills?

Ambassador Marcie Ries: When we say diplomacy, we mean a very broad area of activities. We mean not just the person who goes to see the prime minister to talk about foreign policy issues. We mean our consular officers who are our front door, and who are the ones who are conveying the impression of America and who are helping to protect our country. We mean the management officers who negotiate virtually every day, negotiation being a core diplomatic skill, and without whose activities these other sorts of foreign policy activities wouldn't be able to happen. We certainly mean public diplomacy, because today, diplomacy is not just talking to the government. There are pieces of diplomacy today that actually require also some very specific skills.

Ambassador Marc Grossman: We tried to say [that] a wise system would combine the idea of the midlevel entry and the Diplomatic Reserve Corps. Use midlevel entry when you need to. Use the Diplomatic Reserve Corps when you need to. But the total is to try to support this expanded definition of diplomacy.

AFSA President Eric Rubin: We do have a real shortage of overseas assignments, particularly at the midlevel, particularly in certain cones and specialties. We have an incredibly slow promotion situation, particularly in certain cones and specialties. What will we say to members who say: "I already am having a hard time getting promoted. I'm already having a hard time getting overseas assignments. I've been doing this for 15 years. I've paid my dues. I've sacrificed a lot. My family has. I've learned a lot. I have a lot of skills that I could put to use."

Ambassador Marc Grossman: AFSA has to decide what AFSA has to decide for its members. What we're saying is here's an idea that needs to be considered—a defined midlevel entry program: 25 people the first year, 25 people the second year, 50 people the third year. Stop, evaluate. If you like it, go on to a maximum of 500. If you take the rest of our recommendations, you'd have a Foreign Service of about 16,500 people. And I think that given the world as it is today, if you could have 500 people or fewer who had come for very specific reasons, that's a manageable problem.

I got it. You don't like this. But I promise you, you will like some of the other ideas out there even less. And believe me, we heard ideas about deprofessionalizing the Service, five-year drop-in, no more careers. And we say we oppose that. And we also know that people who are very senior in the transition, they're attracted to these ideas. So, what are we going to do? We're just going to sit back and say, "No, can't change anything," or will we have something to say: "The way you're thinking about this is incorrect; we oppose it, but we get it. Here's another way to think about it."

ABOLISHING CONES

AFSA President Eric Rubin: I endorse that point in going back to the original argument that you can't fight something with nothing, and no is not a sufficient answer. And I think we all agree on that. On the question of getting rid of cones: "The Foreign Service already tried an unconed system in the early 1990s. And it was widely viewed as a failure. How would a new system without cones be different?"

Ambassador Marc Grossman: We were conscious of the efforts in the past, but we felt that the cones system, as it currently exists, is a caste system. And it creates division not only inside the Foreign Service but between the Foreign Service and the Civil Service. And so we wanted to put out a new idea.

What we've said is this: Everybody should enter the Foreign Service without a cone. Let people come in as Foreign Service people. And then they do their first few years, and maybe the majority of them do it in consular or other areas. Then when they hit tenure to the time that people become senior, we recommend that they don't chase cones, they chase competencies and capacity. So that when they get ready to compete for senior ranks, they will have worked in all areas and be able to lead people who are in all of these areas.

Some people will say, "I just want to do consular work." And "I'd just like to be in management." That's fine. And there'll be a place for that. But the most senior people shouldn't be an ambassador unless you can run and understand every part of your mission.

FINAL WORDS

Ambassador Marcie Ries: We aren't going to get change without support from all parts of the government, from the new president and their staff, from the Congress and, most especially, from the Foreign Service and those of us who are retired from the Foreign Service. It has to be a nonpartisan effort.

Ambassador Nicholas Burns: If Congress and the president could enact even three-quarters of these reforms, it would be the biggest transformation in the Foreign Service in generations. And that's what we need.

We're going to have an administration that really cares about the federal workforce and about public service and will honor it. So this is a great time for AFSA. It's a great time for our community to be very respectfully putting ideas in front of the new administration. Eric, thank you again for your leadership and friendship. We're members of your organization. We're going to look to you for leadership as we go forward.

AFSA President Eric Rubin: Thank you, Marcie and Marc and Nick, and all of your staff. This kind of road map, suggested road map, is a first step, but it's very substantive, very bold. I can also assure our members we will go into this process looking out for the welfare and the interests and the needs of our members, and our obligations to our members and the U.S. government's obligation to people who have sacrificed a lot, whose families have sacrificed a lot in service to their country. I think we can find the right balance there.

And I hope this partnership can continue, because we all want the same thing, which is a revived and healthy and influential Foreign Service that serves our country well and serves it better than it can right now. ■

PHIL FOSTER

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE

Recommendations for Action

The Association of Black American Ambassadors offers a set of measures to make diversity and inclusion real at State and USAID.

In the wake of last year's events that put a spotlight on problems of diversity and inclusion at the State Department, the Association of Black American Ambassadors crafted a draft statement on diversity in the Foreign Service. On Oct. 29, the ABAA convened an online diversity conference to consider a unified initiative to press for diversity and anti-racism in the U.S. Foreign Service and the foreign affairs agencies more broadly.

Chaired by Ambassador (ret.) Charles Ray, on behalf of the ABAA, participants included Ambassador (ret.) Ruth A. Davis, Ambassador (ret.) Edward J. Perkins, Ambassador (ret.) Harry Thomas and other luminaries, as well as others from ABAA and representatives from the American Academy of Diplomacy, the Pickering & Rangel Fellows Association, the Thursday Luncheon Group, Disability Action Group, Hispanic Employee Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies, American Foreign Service Association, Black Professionals in International Affairs, Asian American Foreign Affairs Association and National Public Radio.

In the 45-minute discussion, all participants voiced agreement with the draft statement's intent, the measures it included, and the counsel from Ambassador Ruth A. Davis to present the statement as a series of actionable bullet points. Amb. Perkins emphasized the imperative that the Foreign Service broadly represent elements of American society, and encouraged senior and retired diplomats to work with current employees to ensure that the State Department accurately reflects the Constitution and our nation's values. A number of participants offered comments and suggestions for consideration. Here is the final statement and set of recommendations.

The foreign affairs agencies have a collective responsibility to stand up and take serious action to address structural barriers to diversity and inclusion in their respective agencies. All employees should be provided with the skills, resources and mentoring that contribute to professional advancement. These proposed changes should be codified in the Foreign Service Act of 1980 and implementing regulations.

LEADERSHIP. Unless there is clear and visible support from the highest levels, little action will be taken to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development. We believe that the only way to reverse the institutional failings in these areas is to put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the Secretary of State and those in the senior ranks of the Foreign and Civil Service.

We recommend that:

(1) The Secretary commit to all employees and to the public that he or she will not permit discrimination of any type anywhere at any time and is committed to ending it at the State Department.

(2) The Secretary include in his or her regularly scheduled staff meetings discussions with the assistant secretaries regarding their progress in addressing diversity and inclusion issues such as the racial and gender composition of their bureaus. Particular attention should be placed on the number of deputy assistant secretaries, desk officers and ambassadors.

(3) The State Department and USAID establish clearly defined and measurable ways to financially reward senior personnel for their achievement in reaching the department's diversity goals.

(4) The State Department and USAID appoint a Senate-confirmed Chief Diversity Officer who reports directly to the Deputy Secretary and the Deputy Administrator to be a resource for dealing with diversity issues and coordinating with the agencies' affinity groups.

RECRUITMENT. The State Department and USAID should continue support of the Pickering, Payne and Rangel Programs, and make known the rigid selection process that these Fellows undergo, in order to dispel negative perceptions about their qualifications to be in the Service. They should support and expand Pathways Student Internships, including Presidential Management Fellowships, and assist in their noncompetitive conversion into an FTE [full-time equivalent] at the end of their program. Recruitment outreach should be strengthened.

We recommend that:

(1) The State Department increase the number of Diplomats in Residence (at least 10) at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions (HSI), and other institutions serving significant numbers of minority students, as well as at public land grant and private colleges. They should focus on recruiting African Americans, LatinX, Asian- and Pacific Islander-Americans, Native Americans, Arab Americans, disabled Americans, LGBTQIA and any other historically underrepresented Americans.

(2) The State Department examine the process of security clearances for Fellows, taking into account that people with economic disadvantages might have encountered problems related to debt repayment.

(3) The State Department double its recruiting programs and set a goal to increase the annual intake to an established goal within three to five years.

(4) The State Department increase the number of paid internships for members of underrepresented communities, especially for those demonstrating financial need.

ASSIGNMENTS. Underrepresented Foreign Service officers and specialists can advance America's foreign interests at all posts, and their assignments should reflect this from their entry into the Foreign Service throughout their careers.

We recommend that:

(1) The State Department and USAID cease the practice of assigning African Americans predominantly to the Africa Bureau, especially in ambassadorial and other high-level positions.

(2) The State Department and USAID end similar de facto practices with LatinX and Asian Americans in the Western Hemisphere, East Asian and South and Central Asian Affairs Bureaus.

(3) The Director General of the Foreign Service recruit officers from underrepresented groups to bid on chief of mission (COM); deputy chief of mission (DCM), principal officer (PO), office director, deputy assistant secretary (DAS), and principal deputy assistant secretary (PDAS) positions.

(4) The Director General of the Foreign Service ensure DCM/PO committees and COM committees are diverse, and provide feedback to those not selected.

TRAINING. We recommend that all senior personnel, Foreign Service and Civil Service, including noncareer officials, especially those serving as ambassadors, be required to take training on hiring and leadership principles, subject to executive order and State Department policy. Such training might be organized into one or more short mandatory courses to enable the maximum number of participants.

Missions should also develop training for all employees to ensure that locally employed staff hiring practices do not reinforce host country's values that contravene U.S. principles and values.

MENTORING. We recommend that the State Department and USAID institutionalize a robust mentoring program for individuals at all grade levels.

PROMOTIONS.

We recommend that the State Department:

(1) With the American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees, rework the 13 Dimensions skill set to support and implement equal employment opportunity (EEO) principles in a more prominent place in the performance evaluation process.

(2) Require language in employee evaluation reports (EERs) to emphasize commitment to diversity, with concrete examples required.

(3) Direct raters and reviewers to use gender-neutral language in EERs.

(4) Hold ambassadors, deputy chiefs of mission and principal officers accountable in their EERs for supporting and implementing diversity and inclusion at post. Rating and reviewing officials of Civil Service employees should be held equally accountable.

(5) In the case of noncareer ambassadors who elect not to have an EER, letters to the White House Personnel Office be sent on those who fail in this regard.

(6) Ensure that members of underrepresented groups serve on every selection panel.

RETENTION. Consistent, high-level support for targeted mentorship of officers from underrepresented communities coupled with promotion-related incentives can help officers of color advance and feel their contributions are valued and growing.

We recommend that the State Department:

(1) Pay more attention to retention. Increased payments that reduce or eliminate student loans might help retain more diverse candidates. To be eligible, the employee should commit to serve for at least five years.

(2) Support external training programs, such as the International Careers Advancement Program that helps prepare mid-level foreign affairs practitioners to advance to more senior levels.

(3) Make exit interviews mandatory—and retroactive, to include those who did not have an exit survey on separation—and collect data to make changes in the system that would keep people in the Service. Data should include patterns of assignments; challenges for underrepresented members of the Foreign and Civil Service in finding mentors, employment opportunities and treatment of spouses; and the impact of and procedures for (cone) track designation.

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PHIL FOSTER

DIPLOMACY AND DEMOCRACY: PUTTING VALUES INTO PRACTICE

American diplomats can play an important role in addressing the global weakening of democracy.

BY MICHAEL J. ABRAMOWITZ

Over the past 14 years, my organization, Freedom House, has tracked a steady erosion of political rights and civil liberties around the world. The decline has affected not just the states that were already repressive, such as Russia and China, but also new democracies such as Poland and Hungary and long-established democracies, including the United States. Our reports show a long-term decline in the vitality of our own democracy, a trend that has become especially pronounced in recent years and undermines our credibility as a champion of human rights globally.

The disturbing global trend is a direct threat to U.S. interests, as our country benefits from being surrounded by democratic allies with whom we can work effectively to tackle shared challenges such as terrorism and climate change. The advent of COVID-19 makes it even more urgent to halt and roll back the assault on democracy, as we have seen strongmen use the health crisis as cover to attack the free press, curtail freedoms of association and assembly, decrease government transparency, disrupt elections and engage in other abuses of power that could further erode democratic governance.

As the son of former State Department officials, I am well aware of the difference that diplomats can make in the world. Stationed in Bangkok in the late 1970s and early 1980s, U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Morton Abramowitz, my dad, and my mom, Sheppie, who worked closely with the International Rescue Committee, labored to mobilize the U.S. embassy to address the refugee crisis created by the communist regimes in Cambodia and Vietnam, in which millions of people fled to Thailand and neighboring countries. Thanks at least in part to their efforts and the efforts of other diplomats in the mission, hundreds of thousands of refugees were accepted by the United States, eventually becoming productive and engaged citizens of our country.

This is one reason why I am so convinced that American diplomats can play an important role in addressing another great challenge of our times—the global weakening of democracy and the return of authoritarianism as a dominant form of governance in many parts of the world.

While we have not always lived up to our aspirations, most administrations of both political parties have recognized that addressing attacks on democracy and human rights must be a key component of U.S. foreign policy. President Jimmy Carter established a human rights bureau at the State Department that

Michael J. Abramowitz is president of Freedom House. Before joining Freedom House in 2017, he was director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Levine Institute for Holocaust Education. Previously he was national editor and then White House correspondent for The Washington Post. *He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a board member of the National Security Archive.*

still provides an annual assessment of individual countries' human rights records. President Ronald Reagan worked with Congress to establish the National Endowment for Democracy and other institutes aimed at supporting the advance of democratic practice around the globe. The outgoing administration is on record as supporting the cause of global human rights and democracy—and puts special focus on the cause of religious freedom—even if its commitment to this agenda has been questioned.

What Diplomats Can Do

Individual diplomats have a crucial role to play in the defense of democracy around the world.

First, American diplomats can make a renewed commitment to democratic values in their day-to-day work. Support for democracy starts at home, and highlighting the need to strengthen our own country's democracy can be a powerful way to gain credibility when it comes to defending democratic practice abroad. In South Korea this past summer, Ambassador Harry Harris made sure that his embassy's official Twitter account expressed solidarity with peaceful protesters calling for racial justice in the United States, and embassy officials even hung a large Black Lives Matter banner in front of the mission. While the media reported that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's office asked for the sign to be taken down, the gesture sent a clear message that great democracies are capable of reflection and self-correction and don't simply lecture other countries.

More concretely, diplomats can work to strengthen American democracy by pushing for a more diverse and inclusive Foreign Service. State Department staff should encourage the leadership to reform recruitment practices. According to a January 2020 Government Accountability Office report (GAO-20-237), only 32 percent of the department's full-time, permanent, career employees—including both Civil Service and Foreign Service members—identify as racial or ethnic minorities. For the Foreign Service alone, the number dips to 24 percent, meaning our diplomatic corps is significantly less diverse than the public it represents. Reforms to the recruitment process could help, starting with a review of intake procedures for any inherent biases and consideration of changes that would allow for midcareer entry into the Foreign Service.

Second, U.S. diplomats can educate young people on democracy. U.S. diplomats are often the first, and sometimes the only, representatives of democracy who can reach out to the youth of the world. Global dissatisfaction with democracy, particularly in developed nations, is at an all-time high, increasing

Diplomatic support for human rights defenders … can make a life-or-death difference for these individuals.

from 47.9 percent in the 1990s to 57.5 percent in 2019, according to a report by the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Future of Democracy. And data show that the world's 1.8 billion young people share this sentiment. Many feel excluded from or underrepresented by democratic institutions and processes, and do not believe that elected officials have their interests at heart. They view free and fair elections as less important than previous generations and are more tolerant of autocratic rule.

Scholars theorize that this is because much of the world's youth have grown up under some form of democratic rule (Freedom House finds 39 percent of the world's population living in a "Free" country and another 25 percent in a "Partly Free" country with some features of democracy), seeing only its deficiencies and not recognizing the many advantages it has over other forms of government. Diplomats can help young people see all that democracy has to offer by supporting programming that teaches and encourages basic democratic principles such as integrity, inclusion, accountability and civic engagement, and by encouraging actual participation in democratic governance as elected leaders or political activists.

Third, diplomats are often the last line of defense when it comes to human rights abuses. We repeatedly hear from our partners around the world that diplomatic support for human rights defenders, activists and prisoners of conscience can make a life-or-death difference for these individuals. Attending trials, inquiring with foreign government officials about the health and status of detainees, and visiting them in prison can directly influence how long they are imprisoned and how they are treated in custody. It is vital that diplomats report the truth about the human rights situation in the countries in which they are stationed, even if they worry that Washington will not judge them kindly for their candor. Such attention clearly demonstrates to undemocratic rulers that their crimes will not go unnoticed by the world.

Diplomatic involvement has made a critical difference in many well-known cases, whether it was helping to negotiate the safe departure from China of human rights activist Chen Guangcheng, who had been detained under house arrest; routinely pressing Azerbaijani officials until they agreed to release

It is vital that diplomats report the truth about the human rights situations in the countries in which they are stationed, even if they worry that Washington will not judge them kindly for their candor.

human rights defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus, whose health had been failing in prison; or, more recently, making daily visits to the home of Belarusian Nobel laureate and opposition figure Svetlana Aleksievich, to deter violence and intimidation by the regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenka. She had been receiving anonymous threats, and unknown individuals had attempted to enter her home. The visits and social media posts about her case by foreign diplomats helped keep her safe until she was able to leave the country.

In many ways, the challenges facing democracy and human rights around the world seem dire. We are in the middle of a lethal pandemic that has presented a range of new challenges to democratic rule and fundamental freedoms. But there are also signs of hope. Protest movements have continued unabated despite lockdowns, and in the past two years they have helped overthrow a dictator in Sudan and threatened another in Belarus. Dictatorships are inherently brittle and face questions from citizens about whether they can deliver services and economic growth. Corruption is an Achilles' heel for many of them.

We must also remember that democratic principles and respect for human rights are not "Western" concepts but universal values with worldwide appeal. It is up to America—and its diplomatic service—to remind global audiences of this essential truth. ■

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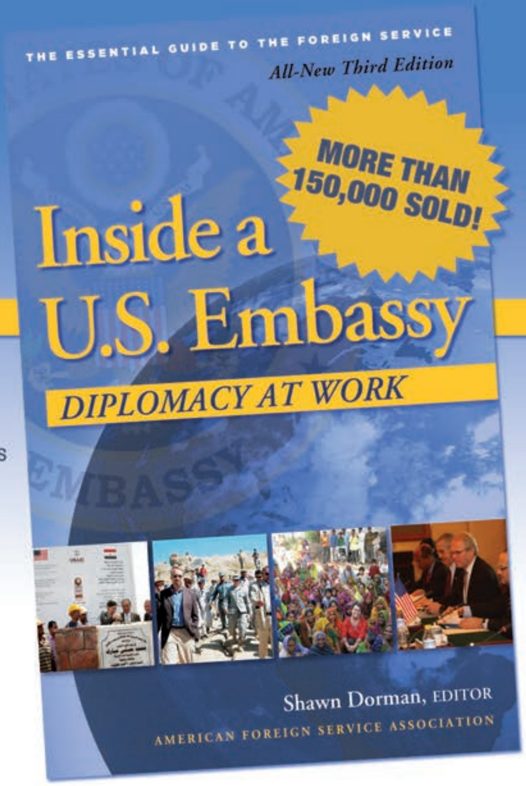

FS BOOKS

PHIL FOSTER

GETTING STATE BACK INTO NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL AND NONPROLIFERATION

Nuclear arms control and nonproliferation remain critical national security challenges. How prepared is the State Department to deal with these issues?

BY LAURA KENNEDY

The nuclear arms control field has been in difficult shape in recent years. A series of treaties and agreements have ended with the prospect for new ones slim. The State Department's institutional capacity has dimmed, as well, particularly as far as Foreign Service ranks are concerned. But the salience of the nuclear challenge has not lessened.

Despite drawdowns of some 85 percent in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals from their historic highs, the two countries still maintain some 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons whose use would end life as we know it. While China's nuclear arsenal is vastly smaller, it is by no means decreasing. The North Korean nuclear challenge is as real as ever. The U.S. decision to abandon the Iran nuclear deal has gravely shortened the time in which Iran could mount a nuclear weapons breakout. Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan continue to be at loggerheads.

So as a new administration surveys the nuclear policy field in January 2021, nuclear arms control and nonproliferation remain critical national security issues. The Trump administration outlined ambitious proposals for strategic nuclear arms control with Russia and China but pursued them in a ham-handed manner. A Biden administration can be expected to extend New START, the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, due to expire Feb. 5, 2021, and will almost certainly explore how further arms control measures with Russia and China might bolster U.S. security, presumably beginning with serious strategic security dialogues.

The gravity of the stakes argues, further, that the State Department examine how it is equipped to deal with nuclear issues in the arms control, nonproliferation, security and

Laura Kennedy, a retired FSO, served as ambassador to Turkmenistan, ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna. She serves on various boards, including Foreign Policy for America and the Arms Control Association.

The partisan divisions within Congress today argue for more rather than less engagement between Capitol Hill and State.

disarmament areas. In sketching out these challenges in the nuclear field in the following, I note that many of the suggestions could also be relevant to other fields such as chemical weapons and biosecurity.

Where We Find Ourselves

During the last four years, the Trump administration has withdrawn or threatened to withdraw from a whole series of nuclear and nonnuclear agreements, leaving only New START hanging by a thread. In addition to that long-avowed opponent of arms control agreements, former National Security Adviser John Bolton, a number of respected arms control theorists and practitioners have referred to the "end of arms control" (Linton Brooks) or declared that "disarmament is at a dead end" (Frank Rose). The latter group, however, is by no means giving up on either the desirability or feasibility of nuclear arms control. Those experts are instead expressing pessimism about the future of traditional, legally binding treaties limiting specific nuclear weapons categories, as typified by New START, because of changed geopolitical conditions and the surge of great power competition.

The increasing difficulty of mustering the necessary 67 votes to obtain advice and consent for treaty ratification in a polarized U.S. Senate and the ease of presidential withdrawal from ratified treaties without any congressional debate or approval also complicate arms control negotiations. It impels any administration to draw on a range of mechanisms to achieve more stable and secure future nuclear arrangements. Further souring the prospects for Senate ratification of potential new treaties is Russia's record of noncompliance with a number of conventional and nonconventional arms treaties.

Not so fast, argues one of our foremost nuclear practitioner-scholars, Rose Gottemoeller, who believes that we can and should aim not only at extending New START (which she negotiated) but seek to negotiate a follow-on agreement with Russia. Gottemoeller acknowledges the tortuous nature of securing advice and consent to ratification for New START, but she argues that a legally binding agreement confers a higher status domestically, as well as with the negotiating partner and the international community. The process itself, she maintains, strengthened the treaty and was educational for both the public and Congress, which called for an unprecedented amount of testimony and required answers to its concerns. (Critics grumble, however, that the necessity for rounding up the necessary GOP votes for New START allowed congressional opponents to demand an even higher price tag for the subsequent U.S. nuclear modernization program, tabbed at around $1.2 trillion.)

The difficulties of traditional treaties notwithstanding, most agree on the broader context (and that includes many Republicans and Democrats, practitioners and academics), which is this:

- We are in an era of increased great power competition.
- We need to find the means to engage China in nuclear arms control.
- Future arms control should draw from a menu of legally binding treaty regimes, strategic stability dialogues, confidence building and risk reduction measures, reciprocal unilateral measures (such as the sweeping Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of the George H.W. Bush administration), and other bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

With this in mind, the new administration will want to examine how well positioned the State Department is—in terms of staffing, organization and policy processes—to carry out the president's nuclear agenda.

The Importance of Congress and the NSC

The partisan divisions within Congress today argue for more rather than less engagement between Capitol Hill and State if we are to restore a semblance of that now quaint order when "politics stopped at the water's edge." Whether the incoming administration decides to pursue any new legally ratifiable nuclear treaties or not, State Department officials will want to improve communications with Congress. Aside from the power of ratification, Congress has extensive legislative and budgetary means to support or curtail future arms control arrangements and to determine the degree of funding and scope of our nuclear arsenal. Not only should State policy leadership interact formally with Congress, but individual officers should cultivate relationships with members and staffers who are usually overwhelmed with the press and range of issues with which they deal. They welcome briefings from State Department experts, especially in relatively esoteric fields such as nuclear policy.

> Are there redundancies in the Bureaus of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN) and Arms Control, Verification and Compliance (AVC) that might be streamlined?

As State ideally seeks to repair years of inadequate budgets, atrophying staff levels and marginalization in the policy process, it should increase the number of State officers detailed to Congress. State might also consider linking congressional details to assignments in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H). And, yes, we should encourage substantive congressional visits abroad to get a direct feel for nuclear and related foreign policy issues, rather than the superficial whirlwind CODELS that sometimes occur.

Congress is the indispensable partner of the executive branch, and both should benefit from focused congressional travel—whether it be to NATO to discuss concerns of this nuclear alliance, or key capitals such as Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, Moscow, London, Paris, Berlin, New Delhi and Islamabad, to discuss their views on nuclear issues. Add to this list visits to the United Nations in New York to get a sense of the challenges faced by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to Geneva to examine how we might reanimate the Conference on Disarmament.

Vienna showcases both the extraordinary range of nuclear nonproliferation, safety, security and peaceful use activities carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization, as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. State should seek ways to invigorate and support the bipartisan National Security Working Group, the successor to the Senate Arms Control Observer Group, which could make regular visits to the site(s) of any future nuclear arms negotiations for briefings by the U.S. team—an investment in securing ultimate Senate support for any future treaty.

Each president, of course, decides how he or she wants to employ the National Security Council. Whether an activist or a coordinating model is chosen by President-elect Joe Biden, State should seek to detail as many officers as possible to the NSC Arms Control and related directorates. A new national security adviser might also consider whether, to ensure better policy coordination, the now-separate arms control, and defense directorates should be combined, as they were prior to the Obama administration. Both the NSC and State benefit from the interchange. Career arms control experts can burnish technical and foreign policy skills with an enhanced appreciation for the domestic context of arms control, and hone negotiating skills with the always-demanding interagency community. And while we are talking about State details, the Department of Energy is as relevant as the Pentagon in the nuclear arena. In making such details, State should ensure that the detailees have positions waiting for them when they complete those assignments.

State's Arms Control Bureaucracy

The arms control bureaucracy at Foggy Bottom has gone through a number of reorganizations since the demise of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in 1999. Each left scar tissue, so management might be loath to undertake a new one. But the beginning of a new administration should be a time to at least review structure and process, as well as policy. Here, too, Congress will take an interest (witness its hold on the Bureau of Cyberspace Security and Emerging Technologies, which the Trump administration proposed to add to the "T" family headed by the under secretary for arms control and international security).

Given the comingling of nuclear issues in the nonproliferation and arms control spheres, are there redundancies in the Bureaus of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN) and Arms Control, Verification and Compliance (AVC) that might be streamlined? Might these two bureaus even be reconfigured along other functional lines, rather than the current division between arms control and nonproliferation? One such reconfiguration could be grouping multilateral regimes together in one bureau, with another to house strategic and emerging security issues. Before actually undertaking any new reorganization, however, priority should be placed on reviving AVC, whose role and staff were particularly diminished during the Trump administration.

The State Department has been fortunate in having a wealth of nuclear experts over the years, but the cadre of experienced practitioners has thinned out since the heyday of nuclear negotiations. In particular, the Foreign Service has to rebuild its greatly diminished nuclear expert ranks. A number of FS (and civil servants) were pushed out during the Trump administration or left in dismay over its policies. Over time, the number of FS slots in the "T" family has dwindled.

To draw excellent FSOs to the "T" family, we will need to re-create in these bureaus a career ladder for the Foreign Service, which is now virtually nonexistent.

Certainly, our Civil Service ranks are filled with outstanding experts who can bring continuity and depth to the nuclear field. But if there is no career track for FSOs in the "T" family, the nuclear field will miss out on the particular skills and perspectives that they can bring, whether it be negotiating and language skills or knowledge of our nuclear partners and competitors.

If we do not re-create the FSO slots in "T" that have been either dropped or converted, we will miss the next generation of such nuclear stars as Stephen Ledogar, Mark Fitzpatrick, Greg Thielmann and Steve Pifer, to name but a few. In fact, we brought John Ordway out of retirement in 2011 because his diplomatic skills, coupled with deep knowledge of Russia and Russian, made him a superb head of the Bilateral Consultative Commission established to deal with New START implementation. To draw excellent FSOs to the "T" family, we will need to re-create in these bureaus a career ladder for the Foreign Service, which is now virtually nonexistent in AVC and has lost many rungs in ISN, as well. Ideally, the Director General (in consultation with "T") would review the staffing charts of the relevant offices to ensure that there are opportunities for FSOs to serve in mid- and senior-level positions to the benefit of both the bureaus and the Service. (Such a review would also be useful for other functional bureaus. More broadly, State should look at ways to lessen the concentration of FSOs in the geographic bureaus to the relative exclusion of service in the functional bureaus.)

FSOs typically staff our Vienna and Geneva arms control/nonproliferation missions but not the complementary offices at State. Why not link these overseas jobs with the domestic counterpart offices? Geneva and Vienna will always be draws, but the diplomats filling the specialized slots there will substantially benefit from prior work in AVC and ISN in addition to being prime candidates for future senior positions in the "T" family. And they will bring those same skills to assignments in the geographic bureaus, whose regional affairs offices should include a solid focus on arms control issues as, for example, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs traditionally has.

The State Department will benefit overall from developing officers better grounded in nuclear and other arms control issues (The Hague for chemical weapons and Geneva, again, for biosecurity issues). Drawing effectively on both the Civil Service and Foreign Service will enhance our ability to tackle such specific issues as the North Korean nuclear challenge, as well as reengaging on the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Both highly complex nuclear issues were negotiated by multilateral coalitions and reflected historic and political issues for which area experts could be especially useful as team members. Our civil servants should continue to be offered relevant posts overseas, as well. We should look for opportunities to detail both FS and CS personnel to international nuclear organizations such as the IAEA, just as we have to NATO. This could enhance our influence in key institutions in addition to contributing to the professional development of our international security experts.

In the Multilateral Sphere

Developing synergy between the State Department's Foreign and Civil Service will be more important than ever in today's increasingly complex and multipolar world. Some of the world's multilateral nuclear institutions are showing strains, some of which are long-standing. The Conference on Disarmament, the world's sole standing multilateral disarmament body, for instance, has not been able to negotiate a treaty since the CTBT in 1996 because its consensus rules allow any one state to hold up even the start of a new negotiation. The IAEA is, by contrast, a highly evolved institution that is open to all states and has successfully accommodated new nuclear tasks over time, such as nuclear security, which got a major push from the Obama administration's Nuclear Security Summit process. But even the IAEA has governance challenges, such as the inability of new members to join the regional groups, which are the ticket to election to its Board of Governors.

Are there ways we can help strengthen or reform these multilateral bodies to more effectively agree on new nuclear arrangements and implement those already in place? Is it time to think of new bodies, a series of existing informal groups of states or ad hoc coalitions to deal with particular issues? These are some of the institutional issues that should be examined by the new State Department leadership.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, for example, has only occasionally been able to produce a consensus final document in its 50-year history. It faces even rockier times ahead (the 10th Review Conference should have taken place in April 2020 but has been twice postponed due to COVID-19 and is now set for August 2021). Widespread impatience among NPT member states over the pace of nuclear disarmament (mandated in the NPT's Article VI) led to the separate negotiation and approval in 2017 by 122 states of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This treaty will enter into force on Jan. 22, 2021, now that the 50th required country has ratified.

> The State Department also needs to tap expertise beyond the government, especially as newer fields of cyber, artificial intelligence and space issues impact the nuclear field.

None of the five official nuclear weapons states (also dubbed the P-5: the U.S., U.K., Russia, China and France), the de facto nuclear weapons states (India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel) or those allies under the "nuclear umbrella" have joined the TPNW. Nevertheless, this new treaty will inevitably pit its adherents against those outside the regime. While there is little likelihood the latter ranks will soon embrace the TPNW, there is a real need to seek some common ground between these two camps—and at a minimum conduct a civil dialogue—or risk erosion of the nuclear proliferation firewall. Many in the international arms control community will welcome a lessening of the often heated and damaging polemics commonly heard in the Trump administration in official statements, whether issued in formal plenaries or via Twitter.

The NPT does not include nuclear-capable states India, Pakistan and Israel. The last is a special case: Israel neither

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A more flexible assignment process—and more human resources—could allow for State details to think-tanks such as NTI and universities (and vice versa).

confirms nor denies its nuclear status, but its presumed nuclear status has long been a contentious issue in the NPT, particularly among Middle Eastern NPT members. This is a good example of the type of situation in which the involvement of FSOs can be of unique benefit. Former FSO Tom Countryman brought diplomatic skills, Middle East experience and Arabic language to his nonproliferation job as ISN assistant secretary. These skills gave Countryman special entrée to work on the issue of the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone with Israel and its neighbors.

As the new administration examines possibilities for a more systematic nuclear dialogue with China, we should develop a cadre of Asian area experts with arms control expertise similar to that of the Russia arms control cadre we developed over the long years of the Cold War. We will need both South Asian and arms control experts, as well as novel ways to engage nuclear India and Pakistan, both of whom have made clear their unwillingness to join the NPT (which will admit only nonnuclear states). One such effort, which we called the P5 Plus, brought together India and Pakistan with the five legally recognized weapons states. It was inaugurated by Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Gottemoeller in 2011. In this case, we weren't able to overcome a long-standing disagreement on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty. But ad hoc fora such as this one may offer promising means to tackle a range of nuclear issues beyond existing formal structures.

Tapping Expertise

The State Department also needs to tap expertise beyond the government, especially as newer fields of cyber, artificial intelligence and space issues impact the nuclear field. We have an unparalleled wealth of nuclear and other technical expertise in our universities, our think-tanks and our advocacy organizations. During the last four years in particular, when nuclear negotiations and policy-level security dialogues either halted or sputtered, these nongovernmental organizations did yeoman work in a variety of track two dialogues across the nuclear agenda.

The value of government cooperation with nonofficial entities is perhaps best exemplified by the U.S. Government–Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) partnership, which undergirded both the Obama-era Nuclear Security Summit process (2010-2016) and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which debuted in 2014 and was continued by the Trump administration.

We need to expand such public-private partnerships. A more flexible assignment process—and more human resources—could allow for State details to think-tanks such as NTI and universities (and vice versa). A greater presence of FSOs in academia could also help expand interest both in the field and in State Department careers generally. I, myself, benefited from such a university year at Stanford (when Condoleezza Rice was lecturing on arms control!) and also used the year to both explain U.S. foreign policy and recruit possible new diplomats.

Finally, we need to recruit new and more diverse experts in both the Civil Service and Foreign Service if we are to more effectively approach the complex array of nuclear and other security challenges, including new weapons and technologies. A whole generation of women began moving into senior positions in the historically male-dominated nuclear field during the Clinton administration and ascended further during the Obama years (Michèle Flournoy, Rose Gottemoeller, Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Madelyn Creedon, Lynn Rusten, Laura Holgate, Susan Burk and Anita Friedt, to name just a few), but we need greater generational renewal and diversity throughout the field. Another of my colleagues from the Obama years is helping to lead the way here, former Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, who founded Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation.

The new Secretary of State in the Biden administration will face a daunting array of nuclear issues. Many have defied solution for decades and reflect difficult geopolitical problems not easily amenable to negotiation. But whatever the challenge, we need to tackle issues that are within our competence—and that is to find the best people, craft the most efficient organizations and policy processes, look for closer relationships with Congress, and shape the best policies and diplomacy for advancing U.S. arms control and nonproliferation goals. ■

ON BOOSTING U.S. DIPLOMACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Three New Reports

REVITALIZING THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

By Uzra S. Zeya and Jon Finer
Council on Foreign Relations
Council Special Report No. 89
November 2020

This report and set of proposals (summarized here) are based on input from an advisory committee of experienced former Foreign Service and Civil Service officers and State Department political appointees from both parties, led by Ambassadors William J. Burns and Linda Thomas-Greenfield. The report also drew from previous reports and recommendations from the American Academy of Diplomacy, the American Foreign Service Association, the Atlantic Council, the Stimson Center, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The following are excerpts from the overall introduction, the introductions to each of the main policy areas (with the specifics in each policy area listed in italics), and the conclusion.

The role of the State Department has received heightened attention amid the onslaught it has suffered under the Donald J. Trump administration, which has treated American diplomats and diplomacy with a mix of neglect and disdain. But many of the challenges facing the DOS have existed for decades. … The most pressing challenges facing the State Department include a 21st-century policy environment that has, in some priority areas, evolved beyond the core competencies of most Foreign and Civil Service officers and an institution hollowed out by three years of talent flight, mired in excessively layered structure, and resistant to reform.

Perhaps most important, they include the multigenerational challenge of a diplomatic workforce that falls woefully short of reflecting the diverse country it serves, particularly at the senior-most ranks. … The State Department today risks losing the "war for talent," not only to the private sector but increasingly to other government agencies, due to inflexible career tracks, self-defeating hiring constraints, and a lack of commitment to training and professional development. Finally, DOS is hampered by Congress' failure over many years to pass authorizing legislation, leading to budgetary pressures and diminishing DOS' status in the hierarchy of national security agencies. …This report does not speak to every challenge the State Department faces but rather highlights the reform areas that we identified as reflecting greatest need based on discussions with veteran diplomats and other experts.

Statecraft

For diplomacy to remain the foremost tool of American foreign policy, the State Department should be appropriately postured against the range of emerging national security threats and opportunities the nation faces. … The State Department should therefore develop—both within the Foreign and Civil Service and by bringing on board top outside practitioners—greater expertise in the range of issues that will be essential to American leadership in the 21st century. … The following critical areas are intended to reflect not so much top policy priorities as issues that will shape the decades to come and for which DOS is currently inadequately postured:

- *Climate Change*
- *Pandemic Disease*
- *A Global Diplomatic Footprint That Matches Shifting Global Power*
- *Economic Competitiveness, Equity, and Anticorruption*
- *Technological Transformation*

Institutional Reform: Seismic Culture Shifts Needed

No matter how many new Foreign and Civil Service officers are hired or how much funding for the International Affairs Account is increased, asserting State Department leadership in shaping a disrupted world will not be possible without seismic culture shifts within the institution. This means decisive and long-overdue action to make the State Department a diverse, equitable and inclusive institution. … Institutional transformation also requires moving away from an ingrained risk-aversion mindset, careerism, bureaucratic layering that tangles the Washington decision-making process and hyper-politicization of diplomacy that has inflamed perennial political appointee-career divides, hollowed out senior career ranks and tanked employee morale and recruitment numbers.

- *Diversity as a National Security Priority*
- *Overcoming Risk-Aversion Culture*
- *Delayering and Decentralizing Decision-making*
- *Restoring Trust and Bridging the Career-Noncareer Divide*

Workforce: Open Pipeline, Revolving Door, and Minds

With more than half of Foreign and Civil Service employees having less than ten years of experience, domestic Civil Service staffing frozen at 2017 levels and a brain drain of senior talent since 2017, urgent attention needs to be devoted to revitalizing the professional path and retention of the current DOS workforce. … Mindful of the sensitivity of career officers who advanced national security under significant hardship under the Trump administration, a "right of return" (within limits) would be beneficial, focused on those who left the State Department in the last ten years.

- *Greater Flexibility and Enabling Return (alternative entry paths, replace bidding process, revise or replace "cones" system, streamline evaluation process)*
- *Rebooting and Expanding Training and Continuous Learning (training float, long-term study, recruiting for language)*

Beyond the Near Term

The foregoing recommendations are intended as a road map for an administration from either major party to implement in 2021, requiring nothing more than decisions by a Secretary of State. … But American diplomacy and the State Department would also benefit from some longer-term thinking, even if those goals are more difficult to accomplish.

- *Amend the Foreign Service Act*
- *Unified National Security Budgeting*
- *Diplomatic Reserve Corps*

Conclusion

The Department of State remains a world-class diplomatic institution that employs thousands of the U.S. government's most capable public servants. But left unaddressed, the challenges that DOS faces risk causing irreparable damage to America's standing and influence in the world, ability to advance its interests overseas, and security and prosperity at home. … Prioritizing reform, even in the face of competing demands, is among the most enduring contributions that could be made to American security and prosperity and is essential to equipping American diplomacy for the issues the country faces. … Building a constituency for diplomacy and diplomats—not unlike that which exists for U.S. military institutions and personnel—would be a worthwhile, if generational, project. In the meantime, an administration less hostile to diplomacy than the current can begin reversing the present crisis in its early days by implementing long-overdue changes under existing authorities. Transformation, not restoration, should be the Secretary of State's mandate.

MAKING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY WORK BETTER FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

Co-edited by Salman Ahmed and Rozlyn Engel
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

In 2017 the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace established a Task Force on U.S. Foreign Policy for the Middle Class to identify the elements of a new foreign policy that can more adequately meet domestic policy requirements, in particular one that can simultaneously address the precarious state of the American middle class—arguably the bedrock of America's power—and protect U.S. interests and ensure effective U.S. leadership around the globe.

Members of the task force were Wendy Cutler, Douglas Lute, Daniel M. Price, David Gordon, Jennifer Harris, Christopher Smart, Jake Sullivan, Ashley J. Tellis and Tom Wyler.

Over a period of two years the group carried out three in-depth analyses of distinct state economies in America's heartland—Colo-

rado, Nebraska and Ohio—that included hundreds of interviews. The case study findings contain valuable insights that, while not the typical raw material for foreign policy making over recent decades, are essential to grasp in fashioning an effective policy going forward.

The following is excerpted from the report summary.

If there ever was a truism among the U.S. foreign policy community—across parties, administrations and ideologies—it is that the United States must be strong at home to be strong abroad. Hawks and doves and isolationists and neoconservative alike all agree that a critical pillar of U.S. power lies in its middle class—its dynamism, its productivity, its political and economic participation, and, most importantly, its magnetic promise of progress and possibility to the rest of the world.

And yet, after three decades of U.S. primacy on the world stage, America's middle class finds itself in a precarious state. …

If the United States stands any chance of renewal at home, it must conceive of its role in the world differently. … Five broad recommendations bear highlighting up front.

First, broaden the debate beyond trade. Manufacturing has long provided one of the best pathways to the middle class for those without a college degree, and it anchors local economies across the country, especially in the industrial Midwest. … But debates about "trade" are often a proxy for anxieties about the breakdown of a social contract—among business, government and labor—to help communities, small businesses and workers adjust to an interdependent global economy. … Getting trade policy right is hugely important for American households but it is not a cure-all for the United States' ailing middle class. …

Second, tackle the distributional effects of foreign economic policy. Globalization has disproportionately benefited the nation's top earners and multinational companies and aggravated growing economic inequality at home. … Making globalization work for the American middle class requires substantial investment in communities across the United States and a comprehensive plan that helps industries and regions adjust to economic disruptions. …

Third, break the domestic/foreign policy silos. For decades, U.S. foreign policy has operated in a relatively isolated sphere. National security strategists … have articulated national interests and set the direction of U.S. policy largely through the prism of security and geopolitical competition. … But threats to the nation's long-term prosperity and to middle-class security demand a wider prism—informed by a deeper understanding of domestic economic and social issues and their complex interaction with foreign policy decisions. … It will take better interagency coordination, interdisciplinary expertise, and some policy imagination.

Fourth, banish stale organizing principles for U.S. foreign policy. There is no evidence America's middle class will rally behind efforts aimed at restoring U.S. primacy in a unipolar world, escalating a new Cold War with China, or waging a cosmic struggle between the world's democracies and authoritarian government. In fact, these are all surefire recipes for further widening the disconnect between the foreign policy community and the vast majority of Americans beyond Washington, who are more concerned with proximate threats to their physical and economic security. …

The United States cannot renew America's middle class unless it corrects for the overextension that too often has defined U.S. foreign policy in the post–Cold War era. It is equally evident that retrenchment or the abdication of a values-based approach is not what America's middle class wants—or needs. … All this requires a larger international affairs budget to retool American diplomacy and development for the 21st century. …

Fifth, build a new political consensus around a foreign policy that works better for America's middle class. A foreign policy that works better for the middle class would preserve the benefits of business dynamism and trade openness … while massively increasing public investment to enhance U.S. competitiveness, resilience, and equitable economic growth. It would sustain U.S. leadership in the world, but harness it toward less ambitious ends, eschewing regime change and the transformation of other nations through military interventions. …

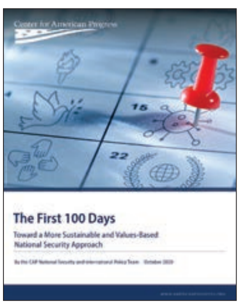
The task force's recommendations provide a blueprint for rebuilding trust. So much of what is required to make U.S. foreign policy work better for the middle class … will require working through difficult trade-offs, where the interests of industries, workers, or communities do not align. The American people need to be able to trust that U.S. foreign policy professionals are managing this tremendous responsibility as best they can, with the interests of the middle class and those striving to enter it at the forefront of their consideration.

U.S. foreign policy professionals will also need to regain the trust of U.S. allies and partners, which no longer have confidence that the deals struck with one U.S. administration will survive the transition to the next. …

Restoring predictability and consistency in U.S. foreign policy requires building broad-based political support for it. … The ideas in this report represent a starting point for discussion—one that will hopefully lead to healthy debate and bring many more innovative and actionable ideas to the table.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS: TOWARD A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND VALUES-BASED NATIONAL SECURITY APPROACH

By the CAP National Security and International Policy Team
Center for American Progress
Oct. 19, 2020



In January 2020 the Center for American Progress set out to consider what a progressive national security agenda could look like in the next administration, whether a new Biden administration or a second Trump administration. The organization convened experts to consider concrete ways to advance progressive ideas in the first 100 days.

The following are excerpts from the report's introduction and summary. The full report contains a chapter on each of five "pillars," with detailed recommendations in each, as well as substantive appendices. The report is supplemented with an interactive database containing some 250 recommendations from the report that users can sort and review by topic, type of action, and relevant agency, office or official responsible for their execution.

Over the past several months, the CAP National Security and International Policy team worked to develop an actionable plan that could serve as a roadmap for the early days of a willing administration—the first executive actions, human capital and budget investments, and policy initiatives. We identified five key pillars of action that not only reflect the reality of the world that the next administration will confront but also the progressive values that are necessary to put the United States on a more principled and sustainable path internationally:

1. Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions to provide the tools and resources necessary to meet today's national security challenges.
2. Living our democratic values at home and abroad and prioritizing the defense of those values.
3. Ending the current wars responsibly and leading with diplomacy—not military action—to resolve conflicts.
4. Recalibrating our global relationships, including with U.S. allies, competitors and adversaries.
5. Tackling global challenges such as climate change, migration, arms control, corruption and building a new multilateralism that advances the collective good.

As CAP built this 100-day plan, we were mindful that the line between domestic and foreign policy is no longer as stark as it once was. This plan touches on what necessary steps the United States must take at home to put it on a stronger footing in the world, including investing in its economic competitiveness, strengthening its democracy and taking bold steps on climate change. CAP will continue to deliver additional bold, progressive ideas in these areas in the months ahead. …

Rebuilding and Rebalancing Our National Security Tools and Institutions. … Recommendations to rebuild and restore trust in our national security institutions and rebalance our national security tools to end the cycle of overreliance on the armed forces to manage problems that should be handled by civilian agencies.

Living Our Democratic Values. Protecting human rights and upholding democratic values has been a perennial goal for U.S. presidents of both major political parties. … The next administration must take immediate steps to reverse harmful policies and halt human rights violations in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, demonstrating through words and deeds a renewed commitment to living our values.

Ending the Wars Responsibly. Despite conflict fatigue at home, ending direct U.S. military involvement will not "end the wars" and will lead to profound consequences for innocent civilians. A more responsible approach will require a commitment to lead with diplomacy, enhance transparency and develop a more sustainable and resilient approach to ongoing threats, including terrorism.

Recalibrating U.S. Global Relationships. America's international reputation has suffered greatly from the current administration's abandonment of alliances, disregard of democratic values and mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The next administration will need to make a concerted effort to rebuild relationships with democratic allies and partners, offering a new vision for global engagement with democratic values at its core. The following chapter provides recommendations to restore democratic partnerships, compete more effectively with adversaries and recalibrate relationships to fit today's challenges.

Tackling Global Challenges. Climate change, unprecedented human migration, new technologies and an ongoing pandemic are just some of the issues the next administration will face from its first day in office. Working with international partners to tackle these problems will be essential to achieving meaningful progress. The next administration will need to return to multilateralism—with renewed commitments to rebuild the trust that was lost over the past four years—to tackle this growing list of global challenges.

FEATURE

WHAT THE Tunisian Revolution TAUGHT ME

Reflections on the 10th anniversary of the Arab Spring from a career diplomat who was there.

BY GORDON GRAY

Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire 10 years ago, on Dec. 17, 2010. His suicide put a human face on the frustration and alienation of the Tunisian people. It led to an ever-growing wave of demonstrations and forced longtime strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to flee to Saudi Arabia exactly four weeks later. The Tunisian people's success in ending Ben Ali's 23-year reign inspired an outpouring of demands for more representative governments throughout the Middle East and beyond, and the slogan chanted during the Tunisian demonstrations ("The people demand the fall of the regime!") was adopted by protestors from Tahrir Square to Wall Street.

Many of us serving at U.S. Embassy Tunis at the time had years of experience in North Africa and the Middle East, and yet we recall the start of the Arab Spring and Tunisia's transition to democracy as an inspirational high point in our careers. Witnessing history was why we joined the Foreign Service in the first place. Constantly having the opportunity to learn and adapt was another reason; and serving in Tunisia when the Arab Spring began was immensely educational.

I drew a dozen important lessons from the experience.

Gordon Gray is the chief operating officer at the Center for American Progress. He was a career Foreign Service officer who served as U.S. ambassador to Tunisia at the start of the Arab Spring and as deputy assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs.

1. It's not about you.

Tunisia was a strange place to work before its revolution. It had a friendly veneer (one clichéd description was "Syria with a smile"), but Ben Ali and his security forces ruled with an iron fist. While it would be an exaggeration to equate the Tunisian Ministry of Interior with, say, East Germany's Stasi, Tunisians were understandably wary about interacting with foreigners, and especially with diplomats. Self-censorship was the norm. Nonetheless, I was still surprised early in my tour when all but one guest were no-shows at a lunch I hosted during a visit to Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city. After the revolution, a member of parliament who had been invited to the lunch apologized to me. Clearly embarrassed, he explained that the governor of Sfax had called the guests the morning of the lunch to sternly warn them against attending; the one person he did not reach was the only attendee.

Diplomats should always remember what Michael Corleone told his brother: “It’s not personal, Sonny. It’s strictly business.” Sfax’s governor was a Ben Ali loyalist—that’s why he had the job—and his point was not to slight me or the U.S. embassy. He just wanted to stay in the good graces of his ever-suspicious boss. The adage cuts both ways, of course; people seeking to curry favor may be more interested in an expedited visa interview or an invitation to the Independence Day reception than in your sparkling personality.


WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/M. RAIS

Anti-government demonstrations during the Tunisian revolution, January 2011.

2. Focus on civil society.

One can’t overstate the importance of reaching out to civil society, which is what took me to Sfax in the first place. Ambassadors William Hudson and Robert Godec, my two immediate predecessors in Tunisia, not only established a dialogue with opposition figures but supported their efforts, as well. Our human rights officer was usually the only foreigner who observed the sham trials of Tunisian human rights activists. He was the sole diplomat who tried to attend the anniversary celebration of the Tunisian League of Human Rights (known by its French acronym as LTDH), the oldest such organization in the Arab world. Rings of plainclothes police stopped him from entering. They could not, however, stop news from spreading that the United States stood for Tunisian human rights. Five years later, the LTDH was one of the civil society organizations in the “Tunisian national dialogue quartet” that received the Nobel Peace Prize for its leadership in breaking the political deadlock in the early years of the country’s transition.

The most astute political operators inside the Beltway maintain good relations with both parties, knowing that those out of power one day might be on the rise another day. Diplomacy is no different. The opposition figures Jeffrey Feltman befriended when he served in Tunisia from 1998 to 2000 were cabinet ministers when he returned to Tunisia as assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs 10 days after Ben Ali fled. The pro-democracy elder statesman I had invited to lunch before Ben Ali left Tunisia became the number two official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the time the lunch took place a few days later.

3. Silence can be golden: What you don’t say is just as important as what you do say.

When the October 2009 rigged election came to its inevitable conclusion and Ben Ali was declared president with “only” 89 percent of the vote, our embassy recommended to Washington that President Barack Obama refrain from sending the routine congratulatory message. We knew that no matter how exquisitely nuanced it would have been, the regime-controlled press would have splashed it across the front pages of all the newspapers with photographs of the two leaders and headlines suggesting that Obama supported Ben Ali. Our recommendation was received with virtually no bureaucratic resistance, and no message was sent.

While a seemingly minor gesture—one that a more confident regime would have shrugged off—it apparently infuriated the Palace, which blamed its hapless ambassador in Washington and recalled him. On the other hand, while Ben Ali received congratulations from many other countries (including a warm telephone call from the French president), Tunisian civil society noticed the absence of any message from the United States and rightly interpreted it as a sign of support and encouragement for them.

4. Expect the unexpected.

The Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared," is just as good advice for diplomats as it is for scouts. When I arrived in Tunisia in September 2009, I did not expect that Ben Ali would bow to overwhelming popular pressure and flee the country a mere 16 months later. Two classmates in my ambassadorial seminar may well feel the same way when they look back at their own experiences, one during the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 and the other during the "triple disaster" in Japan in March 2011. Events can always take an unexpected turn, and as diplomats, we must adapt quickly and effectively.

U.S. EMBASSY TUNIS

Ambassador Gordon Gray addresses the Independence Day reception at U.S. Embassy Tunis on March 20, 2011.

5. Seek as many different perspectives as possible.

The Romanian ambassador in Tunis confidently told me shortly after unrest started to spread that Ben Ali was "toast." He had witnessed the downfall of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife 21 years before and saw the writing on the wall for Ben Ali and Leila Trabelsi, his widely reviled wife. (Their flight to Saudi Arabia saved them from the Ceausescus' violent end.) In another example, a first-tour officer within the embassy was an expert in assistance programs, and creatively advanced sensible proposals for U.S. support to post–Ben Ali Tunisia. Sourcing different perspectives can offer unexpected foresight and an inventiveness for how to tackle events going forward.

6. Make security your top priority.

The loss of life during the Tunisian revolution was awful and avoidable, but it did not approach the number who died after Ceausescu fled Bucharest in December 1989, and is much less horrific than the death count that mounts in Syria to this day. Moreover, protests in Tunisia did not have any anti-American overtones (indeed, protestors chanted, "Yes, we can," and held up signs reading "Game Over"), and the U.S. embassy was not a target in the lead-up to Ben Ali's fall. Security was nonetheless our primary concern. We had to balance the realities of the situation (i.e., the lack of animus directed against the United States as a nation or Americans individually) with a sensitivity to the uncertainties of the situation and the different experiences and expectations of our staff.

Too many of us had lost colleagues during previous assignments, so we took security seriously well before December 2010. Our regional security officers had been diligent about scheduling drills on a regular basis, and we made sure everyone participated. The Foreign Service Institute led a crisis management exercise for us the month before demonstrations began, which not only helped us diagnose and remedy potential communications issues but also helped solidify cohesion in the Emergency Action Committee.

As the protests intensified, we kept senior security leaders in Washington fully informed; they, in turn, came up with creative solutions to meet our security needs and did not overreact by mandating the ordered departure of embassy personnel, which proved to be unnecessary. We conducted town hall meetings with embassy staff (with a special focus on the concerns of our Tunisian colleagues) and with the American community. We paid particular attention to the international school, which so many embassy dependents attended, and we were fortunate that our defense attaché was an active and respected member of the school board.

7. Anticipate Washington's needs.

Understanding Washington is essential for managing its infamous 4,000-mile screwdriver. Credibility can only be earned over time, but the frustrating nature of the Ben Ali regime impeded clientelism. Thanks to our deputy chief of mission's extensive experience on the State Department's seventh floor and innate feel for its operations tempo, we succeeded in feeding Washing-

Events can always take an unexpected turn, and as diplomats, we must adapt quickly and effectively.

ton's seemingly incessant appetite for information by adapting to its battle rhythm.

Offering creative solutions is an embassy's most important contribution during a time of upheaval. Just 11 days after Ben Ali's departure from the scene, large-scale demonstrations against the Mubarak regime began in Cairo's Tahrir Square, followed soon thereafter by similar protests in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere. Bandwidth in Washington was tested, but our embassy's policy recommendations were welcomed with interest rather than dismissed as "not invented here." We provided Washington with relatively low-cost, easy-to-implement steps it could take to signal support in a cable we sent in February 2011, a message we referred to within the embassy as the "low-hanging fruit" cable.

8. Think big.

At the same time, we did not just aim for singles or doubles. One of our more ambitious recommendations was to make Tunisia eligible for the Millennium Challenge Corporation's threshold program. While our recommendation met with initial skepticism, the White House announced Tunisian eligibility for the program less than seven months later, when President Obama hosted interim Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi (who had reemerged on the political stage after decades of ostracism) in the Oval Office. Three years later, the MCC announced its selection of Tunisia for a compact (i.e., a five-year grant).

9. Encourage visits; then capitalize on them.

Visits by foreign dignitaries spark the need to identify "deliverables" and, more often than not, force Washington to make tangible decisions rather than extend debates into another interagency meeting. Several programs—not just the MCC—moved forward as a direct result of the Caid Essebsi visit. Similarly, visitors from Washington afford embassies the rare opportunity to make their case directly. In February 2012, during a visit by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, we highlighted our recommendation that the U.S. government provide $100 million in emergency budget support for the new Tunisian government. She agreed, and as soon as she boarded her plane for her next destination, she called the department to make it happen. We also won support from her and, separately, from visiting senators to initiate negotiations on a free-trade agreement. While those negotiations have yet to begin, they have broad bipartisan support in the Senate.

Engagement with Washington was generally a good idea, but we had to be alert for instances when its enthusiasm got the better of its judgment. One office pushed the idea of building an online platform connecting young Tunisian activists with aging Polish parliamentarians to discuss political transition. While we did not know how many Polish parliamentarians were fluent in Arabic or French, we figured we were on safe grounds in assessing that there were few Tunisians who spoke Polish. We were also inundated with a seemingly steady stream of diplomatic tourists, officials who wanted to come and see the aftermath of the revolution firsthand, without any clear (or stated) purpose. We succeeded in turning off some less-than-essential visits by simply asking what the objective was.

10. Seek force multipliers.

External partners often augmented the embassy's resources, and we welcomed them. While one can reasonably question whether the military is the appropriate entity within the U.S. government to initiate development projects, we capitalized on U.S. Africa Command funding for humanitarian assistance projects in Tunisia. The concept was sound: aim for small-budget ($500,000 was the ceiling), high-impact projects throughout the country. We were able to support Tunisian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that fostered rural employment for women, educated autistic children, and addressed drug addiction. In addition to the obvious benefits for the Tunisian people, these programs demonstrated concrete steps the United States was taking to support Tunisia's transition.

Ribbon-cutting ceremonies might not be the most original or exciting public diplomacy idea, but they helped drive home our message that the United States supported the Tunisian people—wherever they lived—and their transition to a more open political and economic system. Not all U.S. support was traditional: one of my favorite projects was the brainstorm of an embassy dependent who loved to skateboard. The public affairs section identified sports diplomacy funding, which brought skateboarders to conduct workshops in several cities and towns, notably including Sidi Bouzid, where the Arab Spring demonstrations began following Bouazizi's self-immolation.

After the revolution, U.S. and international NGOs became excellent partners and stayed the course through the transition and beyond. The National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute (both of which were anathema to the Ben Ali regime) were on the ground days after it collapsed. Humanitarian NGOs (and, separately, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Disaster Assistance Response Team) brought much-needed expertise to Tunisia's southern border when third-country workers fled the brewing civil war in Libya.

11. Don't forget to have fun.

One of the most memorable days in my diplomatic career was Oct. 23, 2011, when Tunisia held its first truly free and fair elections. Tunisia had a wealth of election observers, from our embassy, which put together a robust observation program, to U.S. and Western NGOs, to Tunisian civil society. As a result, my participation was not necessary. But I would have kicked myself later had I not gone to polling stations that day and seen the long lines of Tunisians waiting patiently in the autumn sunlight to cast their first meaningful ballot. Some carried flags and others brought their children to mark the historic event. Moments like that are why we join the Foreign Service: to observe history in the making and, perhaps, to help nudge it in the right direction.

12. Finally, always remember that diplomacy is about people, not abstract concepts.

Shortly after Ben Ali fled the country, a prominent member of civil society who was tapped to join the national unity government explained to me the root cause of the revolution: "Poverty and unemployment exist everywhere; this happened because of a loss of dignity and a lack of dialogue." These two factors—loss of dignity and lack of dialogue—led directly to the wave of protests and demonstrations that swept North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, and continue to this day in some countries in the region. They also help explain the widespread demonstrations in the United States against systemic racism after George Floyd was killed. Be it at home or abroad, recent history teaches us that we ignore the importance of human dignity and honest dialogue at our own peril. ■

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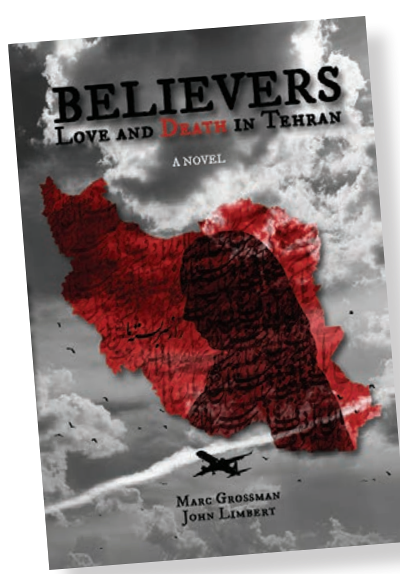
BELIEVERS
Love and Death in Tehran
An Excerpt

On the 40th anniversary of the release of the Iran hostages, a fictional FSO heroine stirs memories of the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran and its aftermath.

BY JOHN LIMBERT AND MARC GROSSMAN

Background

Believers: Love and Death in Tehran (Mazda Publishers, 2020), written by Ambassadors (ret.) Marc Grossman and John Limbert, both AFSA members, is a work of fiction set in Iran and Washington, D.C., during the 1980s and the present. The hero is the fictional FSO Nilufar Hartman, daughter of an Iranian mother and an American father. With the liberty of novelists, the authors have imagined her in scenes both historical and fictional with people real and invented. The following adapted excerpt, set in late 1980 and early 1981, ends with the release of 52 American hostages on Jan. 20, 1981, just a few minutes after Ronald Reagan took his presidential oath of office.



Setting the Scene

During the early summer of 1979, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Alan Porter had asked first-tour FSO Nilufar Hartman to go to Tehran and, with her fluent Persian, help the embassy with its flood of visa applicants. When she arrived in the early morning of Nov. 4, 1979, her Iranian mother's family greeted her at the airport, but no one came from the embassy. She spent the night at the family home and, before she could report to work in the morning, learned that student militants had occupied the U.S. embassy compound and were holding the staff captive.

When it became clear that the crisis would drag on, Porter asked her to stay and report secretly to him on developments in Iran. As her cover, the bicultural Nilufar became the devout revolutionary "Massoumeh." Using family connections, she found work, first at Mehrabad Airport and then in the office of Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, the second most powerful man in revolutionary Iran. Although at daily risk of exposure, Nilufar quickly became Porter's indispensable eyes and ears. We pick up the story here, about one-third of the way through the book, when the Iranians have decided they want to end the hostage crisis.

Tehran and Washington, August 1980

In late August, just a month after the Shah's death in Egypt, Beheshti asked Nilufar to arrange an urgent meeting with German Ambassador Gerhard Ritzel. "I'd like you to interpret. Doctor Sadeq Tabataba'i will join us. His wife is the sister of Khomeini's son Ahmad. He knows the ambassador quite well. It will be just the four of us. We don't need a notetaker."

A day later, Ritzel and Tabataba'i came to Beheshti's office. Although Beheshti's German was fluent, he insisted on using Persian. With Nilufar interpreting, Beheshti told Ritzel: "The Imam has decided it is time to end the matter of the American hostages. He has instructed me to make the arrangements. I am asking you to take a message to the Americans that we are ready to settle based on four points: unfreeze Iranian funds; return the Shah's assets to Iran; pledge noninterference in Iran's internal affairs; and apologize for past actions against Iran."

Ritzel thought for a minute before replying, "Sir, of course my government is ready to do anything to help resolve this problem. I will inform my counterpart in Washington to speak to the Americans. In my view, the last demand—an apology—will be difficult for them."

"So be it. We can waive the apology at the end. It is the Imam's opinion that this crisis has gone on too long and is distracting us from the important work of building our new Islamic Republic," Beheshti said, turning toward Tabataba'i. "Doctor Sadeq here—at the direct request of the Imam—has full power to represent our government in any talks with American officials to work out arrangements. You know him well, and he has my authorization to meet with you as necessary."

Nilufar said to herself, "These *akhunds* are amazing. Shameless hypocrites. First, they create a crisis. Then they prolong it and use it to solidify their power. Now that they're in control, they say that it has gone on too long, and they want to end it. Only 10 months ago Khomeini forbade Iranian officials from even meeting Americans."

Ritzel told Beheshti, "I will send your message to our ambassador in Washington. I will let you know as soon as I have an answer."

"Please work through Dr. Sadeq," Beheshti said. "The Americans will, of course, be suspicious. You can tell them they will have confirmation we are serious. They should listen to the Imam's sermon, not this Friday but the one after. He will state the same conditions. They should have no doubt this approach comes directly from him."

Nilufar's report reached Washington only a few hours behind that of the German ambassador. It thus came as no surprise when the German ambassador in Washington asked for an urgent meeting with the Secretary. After telling him, his deputy and Porter about Ritzel's meeting with Beheshti and the Iranian conditions, the ambassador added, "I know Ritzel. He's been in Iran since before the revolution. He gets along well with the new government, and they obviously trust him to deliver their message. This sounds serious."

The Secretary answered carefully, "Mr. Ambassador, we are grateful for your government's efforts and, in particular, for those of your colleague in Tehran. We have been seeking a viable channel to Khomeini and his people for months.

"Please ask your colleague in Tehran to tell the Iranians we are seriously studying their conditions. Of course, we will want to hear the confirmation he describes. Please tell him also that

John Limbert is a retired Foreign Service officer, an academic and an author. During a 34-year diplomatic career, he served mostly in the Middle East and Islamic Africa (including two tours in Iraq), was ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and, in retirement, was brought back to serve as the first deputy assistant secretary of State for Iranian affairs. Beginning in 1964, he worked in Iran as a university and high school teacher, and later was among the last American diplomats to serve in Iran, where he was held hostage from 1979 to 1981. He has authored numerous books and articles on Middle Eastern subjects. He and his wife, the former Parvaneh Tabibzadeh, reside in Long Island City, Queens, New York.

Marc Grossman is a vice chair of The Cohen Group. Ambassador Grossman served as a Foreign Service officer from 1976 to 2005, retiring as the under secretary of State for political affairs. He had previously served as Director General of the Foreign Service, assistant secretary for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and U.S. ambassador to Turkey. Amb. Grossman was recalled to the State Department from 2011 to 2012 to be the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He is chairman of the board of the Senior Living Foundation of the Foreign Service and serves as a trustee of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the University of California, Santa Barbara Foundation. He is also on the board of the C&O Canal Trust.

even before we do, we are ready at any time to send the deputy secretary to meet with Khomeini's representative."

Porter asked, "Mr. Ambassador, does your colleague say anything about why the Iranians are now ready to settle?"

"He mentions several reasons. He thinks Beheshti had a lot to do with convincing Khomeini. Beheshti is now confident that he and his allies control all centers of power in Iran. They have made the president into a figurehead. They have defeated challengers on both left and right flanks. With our covert help, Beheshti has crushed the leftist Mojaahedin-e-Khalq. From this position of strength, holding the hostages no longer serves any purpose. The death of the Shah in Egypt didn't hurt either."

After the ambassador left, Porter and the deputy secretary stayed with the Secretary. Ever since Porter had briefed them on Nilufar's situation, the two men remained concerned for her safety.

"Gentlemen, it's perhaps too early to open the champagne, but I think we're finally on a good track," the Secretary said. "Alan, we owe a lot to you and to Ms. Hartman. You urged us to keep her there, and you were right. We'll probably never know for sure, but it seems to me our helping Beheshti against the Mojaahedin went a long way in his persuading Khomeini to settle."

The Secretary continued, "And what about Ms. Hartman? She's a very brave young woman, and very few people will ever know what she did and at what risk. Should we bring her home? When she comes back, I hope she stays in the Foreign Service, although I don't know what job can match what she's doing now."

Porter told his bosses, "If she wants to come out, of course we will agree. But if she does, we'll have to keep her out of sight for a while. If she surfaces somewhere else as an American diplomat, the Iranians will realize they've been duped and, at the very least, will retaliate against her family.

"I prefer she stays, at least through the hostage negotiations, which I predict will be long and difficult. Just because the Iranians have finally set out conditions we find reasonable doesn't mean there won't be hard bargaining ahead. They will squeeze out any advantage they can. Once our people are free, they've lost their leverage."

No one in the room stated the obvious—that with American elections only two months away, the president needed a success. For the Secretary and his deputy, their jobs depended on the president's winning a second term in November. …

Nilufar said to herself, "These *akhunds* are amazing. Shameless hypocrites."

Tehran, January 1981

On the morning of Jan. 19, Beheshti called Nilufar into his office. "Ms. Rastbin, I need your help with a very sensitive matter. You've certainly been following the news about the American hostages. Tonight, an Algerian medical team will visit them, and tomorrow evening, God willing, they will leave, and we will be rid of them."

Nilufar knew an order was coming, this time not even disguised as a request. "Sir, how can I help?"

"The release has to go smoothly. The Algerian mediators will be visiting me this afternoon, and I want you to interpret at our meeting. We need to reassure them there will be no last-minute incidents and that they and the Americans will leave safely tomorrow. Between you and me, I will breathe a huge sigh of relief once those Air Algérie planes have cleared Iranian airspace."

"We've done all we can to ensure things will go well at the airport. But you never know. Something can always go wrong. Those damn students are unpredictable. One or two of them could do something stupid and foul up the whole process."

Nilufar said nothing. She knew that for more than a year Beheshti had been the controlling power behind the students. They had served his purpose, and tomorrow he would be finished with them.

"Tomorrow evening I need you to be at Mehrabad to make sure all goes smoothly. The Imam usually doesn't give direct orders, but he's made himself perfectly clear: All the hostages are to fly out tomorrow, and nothing can interfere with their leaving."

"Of course. I'll be there, sir. Do you have any hints something might go wrong?"

"I don't, but I'm not reassured. I worry about *Iraani-baazi* (disorder). I worry about a hotheaded student getting into a fight with an angry hostage. I also worry about deliberate sabotage from some agent of the leftists who would love to embarrass us in front of the world press. Their dream is a riot at the airport, some hostage getting shot, and the whole deal collapsing. They have been railing against the release agreement and are accusing us of surrendering to the 'Great Satan.' They're calling us traitors."

She had never seen the masterful Beheshti so worried. He told her, "Tomorrow night you will be at the airport. Be there by seven. I will have a car with a phone for you and a pass for the special secured area. I don't want to show myself for obvious reasons, but I will if I have to."

With a smile, he added, "I have heard you are a master of defusing airport confrontations. Tell me what is happening, and if you see anything going wrong, call me immediately. I won't be far away.

"One more thing. You can talk to a student named Asgharzadeh. He's one of the few sensible ones. With him you can use my name."

Not wanting to mention anyone by name, she asked, "What about the airport komiteh people? Will they be there?"

"They should not be. This operation is far above them, and they'll just make things more complicated. You already know the komiteh chief Sarhaddi. If he or any of his men show up, tell them to get lost. If they give you trouble, call me."

Beheshti's meeting with the Algerians was brief. They repeated their concern that nothing interfere with a smooth hostage release, and he assured them he had taken all possible measures. He told them the Iranian Air Force would escort the Algerian planes as far as the Turkish frontier.

The next day Nilufar stayed in the office until after sunset. About six p.m. she got into Beheshti's car and found an armed security guard—a young man about 5' 8" and powerfully built—in the front seat.

They traveled west along Enqelaab Avenue toward Mehrabad Airport. Because of curfews, blackouts, gasoline shortages and Iraqi air raids, the normally choked streets were almost deserted.

Her driver took her through a series of checkpoints to the VIP area. He stopped about 50 yards from the VIP lounge and about 100 yards from where three Air Algérie 727s stood ready, rear steps down and engines running. Armed Algerian security men formed cordons around the aircraft. Outside it was about 15°F, and a bitter wind blew from the mountains to the north. She sat in the car and called the number Beheshti had given her, telling him that everything seemed normal, and that there were dozens of shivering journalists on the tarmac.

She left the car and stood in the cold. As she waited, she recognized komiteh chief Sarhaddi walking toward her from the main terminal. Even in the darkness there was no mistaking his slouch and his self-importance. With no effort to be polite, he said, "Ms. Massoumeh, what a surprise. What are you doing here? I thought you had left us for more important work. Can I see your airport pass?"

Nilufar made a head motion to her bodyguard and said, "Please escort the gentleman out of this area. He has no business here." The guard took Sarhaddi's arm and none too gently led him away in full view of the national and international press. "You heard the honorable lady. She is here on Dr. Beheshti's orders, and you are not. *Gur-e-to gom kon, mardikeh bi-sho'ur!* (Get yourself out of here, you little fool!)"

The Secretary continued, "And what about Ms. Hartman? She's a very brave young woman, and very few people will ever know what she did and at what risk. Should we bring her home?"

About 15 minutes later, a group walked from the lounge and boarded one of the planes. She recognized the Algerian mediators, Algerian Ambassador Abdelkarim Ghraieb, Swiss Ambassador Erik Lang and his deputy Flavio Maroni.

At about 7:20 three buses arrived and stopped between her and the planes. About 75 student hostage-takers left the buses and milled around, attempting to look fierce with their weapons and revolutionary outfits. Most of the journalists ignored the students, knowing they would soon be yesterday's news.

Two of the students—one a few years older than the others, and the other a heavily veiled woman a few years younger than Nilufar—walked to where Nilufar was waiting. "I'm Asgharzadeh. This is Ms. Ebtekar. You must be Massoumeh. His Excellency Dr. Beheshti told us you would be here."

Nilufar answered, "Yes. He needs to be sure there are no difficulties here tonight. Are you confident there won't be?"

The woman answered with irritation, "We've taken care of everything. You really didn't need to come. You can go home. If you speak to Dr. Beheshti, tell him that he needn't worry."

Nilufar ignored the insult and said simply, "He'll be happy to hear that."

Nilufar thought, "I know that woman's voice and her face. She used to be at the chichi Iranzamin coed high school. Always wore the shortest skirts and was first on the dance floor. If she recognizes me from some party, I don't think she'll admit it."

At 7:30 two more buses arrived and parked about 75 yards from the planes. Journalists and students moved to an area between the buses and the aircraft.

The bus doors opened, and a few student guards got off. When the Americans appeared, Nilufar gasped at their appearance: thin, haggard, bearded and dazed. They wore odds and ends of ill-fitting clothes unsuited for the wind and cold. As they stepped off the bus, they appeared confused by the noise, the lights and the crowds of students and journalists. A few had to be directed to walk toward the aircraft.

The bus doors opened, and a few student guards got off. When the Americans appeared, Nilufar gasped at their appearance: thin, haggard, bearded and dazed.

As they began to walk, the students, performing for the cameras, began shouting slogans. Nilufar thought, "What a chicken-shit group! They can't even do a departure with any style."

One of the students started pushing a hostage, an army medic, who wasn't moving fast enough for him. The medic turned on him and shouted in English, "Don't push me, you piece of shit." The student pushed harder, and the hostage grabbed his arm. A second hostage put himself inches from the student's face and started berating him in fluent street Persian: "Take your hands off him, you son of a whore."

Students and hostages were now shoving and trading curses. Hostages were pushing guards aside to get off the buses. Nilufar noticed a few students shouting and encouraging others to join the melee. She saw Asgharzadeh and Ebtekar, despite their earlier assurances, standing around doing nothing as the scene descended into chaos in full view of television cameras.

Nilufar immediately dialed Beheshti and reported the trouble to him. "Get me Asgharzadeh on the line," he barked, "Now."

She pointed out Asgharzadeh to the bodyguard, who dragged him to the car. Nilufar could hear Beheshti screaming over the phone. Asgharzadeh handed the phone to Nilufar and ran toward the commotion that was turning into a brawl.

"Keep this line open. Make sure he gets those idiots to stop," Beheshti told her.

Nilufar put down the phone and ran after Asgharzadeh. While he worked to calm the students, she pulled aside the Persian-speaking American and told him quietly in English: "Just get out of here. Get on the plane. Some people are trying to provoke a riot and ruin everything. Don't play into their hands. Go now."

He nodded in understanding, backed away from the students, and walked toward the airplane. Restrained by Asgharzadeh, the other students kept their distance. As he left, Nilufar whispered to the American: "By the way, I really like your Persian. You must have had a great teacher."

He smiled and replied, "Yes, I did. She was great."

The remaining hostages boarded without incident, and the freezing students seemed to lose their appetite for shouting. The steps retracted and the rear door closed. The runway lights, normally extinguished at night because of Iraqi air raids, came on, and the plane began its taxi. The students, much quieter now, gathered near their buses and the journalists milled around waiting for takeoff.

The plane sat at the end of the runway for almost 10 minutes. Nilufar checked her watch. It was a few minutes past 8:30 p.m. Tehran time—just after 12 noon in Washington on inauguration day—when the plane began to roll for takeoff. As it climbed out of sight, she asked herself, "Why the delay? There was no other air traffic. What were they waiting for?"

As the car left the airport, she thanked both the driver and the bodyguard. The latter told her, "I got to know Dr. Beheshti when I was a student in Hamburg. I've been with him since before the revolution. He's a great man. He was worried about tonight's release and told me to do everything I could to help you."

In her head she composed her message to Porter. She telephoned her final report to Beheshti, not neglecting to praise the driver and bodyguard for their good work.

"Thank you, my daughter," Beheshti said. "I'm glad you were there to help. I knew those students would screw things up in the end. Tomorrow I'll send them all to the war and make sure they're in the front lines."

2021-2023 AFSA Governing Board Call for Nominations

Do you want to represent your colleagues and help ensure that the voice of the Foreign Service is heard on the Hill and around the country? Do you want to participate in the management and modernization of a multimillion-dollar organization with a large staff and real impact in Washington, including securing congressional funding for the Foreign Service, working to tell the story of diplomacy to our fellow Americans and ensuring that all members of the Foreign Service are treated with fairness?

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Call for Nominations

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- Vice President for FCS
- Vice President for FAS
- Vice President for Retirees

Constituency Representatives

- State Department Representatives (6) (see additional information on p. 56)
- USAID Representative (1)
- Alternate FCS Representative (1)
- Alternate FAS Representative (1)
- USAGM Representative (1)
- APHIS Representative (1)
- Retired Member Representatives (2)

These positions have two-year terms beginning on July 15, 2021. AFSA bylaws require that Governing Board members participate via in-person attendance at regularly scheduled meetings of the board within 60 days of taking office on July 15, or appointment to office thereafter, and throughout their term in office.

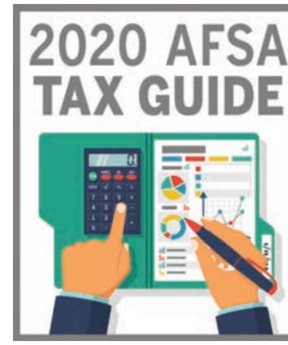
The president and State, USAID, FCS and FAS vice presidents are full-time positions detailed to AFSA. These employees are assigned over complement and are eligible for time-in-class extensions. The active-duty representative positions are not full-time, but they are given a reasonable amount of official time to attend meetings regarding labor management issues. Governing Board members are required to attend monthly lunchtime board meetings and may volunteer to serve on additional committees. To see position

Continued on page 56

Important Dates

Feb. 12, 2021	Deadline for nominations
Feb. 19, 2021	Committee on Elections announces candidates' names
April 26, 2021	Ballots and candidate statements mailed
June 10, 2021	Ballots counted
July 15, 2021	New Governing Board takes office

JOSH



CALENDAR

Please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to cancellation or rescheduling.

December 25-January 3
AFSA Holiday Closure

January 15
AFSA Governing Board Election Cycle Begins

January 18
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
AFSA Offices Closed

January 20
Inauguration Day
AFSA Offices Closed

January 21
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

January 27
12-1 p.m.
Webinar: "Reviewing Your Retirement Plan"

February 17
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

Contact: YazdgerdiTK@state.gov | (202) 647-8160

Reforming the State Department

With the advent of a new administration, the time is ripe to reverse the policies of the outgoing administration that treated the career Foreign Service with disdain.

On a more fundamental level, it is also time to address systemic change by questioning long-held assumptions that have prevented the State Department from realizing its full potential.

In November Harvard's Belfer Center and the Council on Foreign Relations released separate in-depth reports that deal with these twin challenges.

Both groups consulted AFSA on what we believe to be the main issues facing our Service and profession, and the contents of both reports largely reflect our hopes and concerns: to increase the size of the Foreign Service; to greatly expand the time for training, especially at the entry level; to put more FSOs in the field, especially economic officers; to limit the number of political appointees, both ambassadors overseas and assistant secretaries domestically; and to make diversity and workplace flexibility an integral part of our Service.

(See more about the Belfer Center report on p. 19 and the CFR report on p. 37.)

Change of Culture. Both reports point to the overriding need to change department practices through a systemic shift in our culture. Among other serious problems, the Belfer study cites a "reluctance to speak truth to power, a lack of individual accountability and the pursuit of risk avoidance over risk management." That probably rings true for most members.

At a roll-out event moderated by AFSA President Eric Rubin on Nov. 19 (see story on p. 19), Ambassador (ret.) Nick Burns, one of the report's co-authors (with Ambassadors (ret.) Marcie Ries and Marc Grossman), noted that there needs to be a "brutally honest" self-examination of longstanding department practices, such as the cone system, the general aversion to professional education and training, and inflexible personnel policies.

Amb. Burns added that the military and intelligence communities went through this crucial process years before, culminating in the passage of landmark legislation that codified transformational change.

An Amended Foreign Service Act? Both reports also favor amending the Foreign Service Act of 1980. They argue that fundamental changes need to be codified in law with the support of the president and the Congress but say they would "oppose new legislation that does not retain what is right about the current act."

It may be time to amend the FSA—it is hard to contend that the world hasn't changed dramatically since 1980—but in this hyperpartisan atmosphere the ground would need to be prepared very carefully in advance.

At the very least, I would want to see the House Diplomacy Caucus and the Senate Foreign Service Caucus agree on strengthening and updating the current FSA without touching the elements that have made the Foreign Service a distinct body with a strong esprit de corps.

Midlevel Entry—Really? To increase diversity and specialized expertise. both reports call for bringing in people from outside the normal Foreign Service intake processes.

The Belfer report proposes a three-year pilot program aimed at midlevel entrants that would have 25 people enter in the first two years and 50 in the third year. Then the program would pause to be evaluated. The CFR goes further, arguing to "open career entry pipelines at all levels…from entry to senior levels…."

There is reason for concern that this quick fix likely will not work.

New employees hired at the midlevel would have no experience serving at embassies and consulates. They could not effectively mentor entry-level officers on Foreign Service career planning.

During the first assignment as a newly hired midlevel officer, their initial performance would be degraded by the overseas adjustment process that current Foreign Service members overcome during their entry-level assignments.

Further, an influx of newly hired midlevel officers would block the career advancement of many current Foreign Service members, the infamous "pig in the python" issue. Given the up-or-out promotion system, many current midlevel FSOs would face the prospect of early retirement even more than they do now.

If there is need for specific expertise in today's world—cybersecurity, quantum computing, biotechnology, say—wouldn't a modest-size program staffed by experts hired as Foreign Service specialists or civil servants make more sense?

As to the diversity aspect, we have heard from some of our members that increasing the Pickering and Rangel Fellowships (as is being done), providing paid internships to attract underrepresented communities, establishing a formal mentorship program for minority officers and including more people of color on selection and promotion boards is the better way to go.

Please let us know what you think at member@afsa.org.

Contact: jsinger@usaid.gov | (202) 712-5267

Refine, But Don't Re-define, Development

I am hopeful that as a new administration and USAID Administrator come on board, they will remember that development—whether economic, health, political, environmental, gender, social, cultural or otherwise—*is* a science.

As I write this column, it is the Monday after the weekend when most media outlets called the presidential election—exciting times.

In his Nov. 7 speech, former Vice President (now President-elect) Joe Biden called on Americans to come together "to marshal the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of our time."

What a fantastic call to action, one that already motivates us as USAID Foreign Service officers. We are seeing both domestically and in our partner countries the danger when science is discounted.

I am hopeful that as a new administration and USAID Administrator come on board, they will remember that development—whether economic, health, political, environmental, gender, social, cultural or otherwise—*is* a science. And that they will first and foremost listen to career FSOs and other agency colleagues about what that science is saying.

I am also hopeful that USAID's rhetorical designation as the U.S. Government's "lead" development agency will become a more realistic moniker.

Defining development, and USAID's role in it, is hard. The topic is broad, and our status within the interagency pantheon is derived from factors most often beyond the ken of mere career mortals—Congress' interests, global crises, the Secretary's attentiveness, the Administrator's vision and network, advocacy groups' voices, etc.

To boot, our beloved agency suffers from something akin to bureaucratic ageism; America is not known for respecting its elderly, and so too with USAID (which recently celebrated its 59th anniversary!).

Instead of building on the proven experience of the agency, many administrations have opted for something new, shiny and headline-grabbing.

When the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was launched in 2003, USAID got only a piece of responsibility.

The Millennium Challenge Account—at its heart an innovative foreign assistance allocation model—was established as a stand-alone institution in the form of the Millennium Challenge Corporation rather than being incorporated into USAID.

Other interagency partners, such as State and the Department of Defense, have progressively encroached into the foreign assistance realm.

Instead of building on USAID's innovative Development Credit Authority financing instrument, the administration ripped out the DCA and related staff and joined them with the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation to create the Development Finance Corporation.

And most recently, with COVID, USAID has been sidelined from several key task forces and meetings.

There may be good political reasons for these moves, but the continued fragmentation of U.S. foreign assistance—and the related lack of efficiencies, policy coherence and clear messaging—has been documented for decades.

As the transition advances, we will see a flood of punditry and prose on foreign assistance reform and reinvigorating development along with calls for innovation. The U.S. government apparatus will move into policymaking mode, with a new National Security Strategy, Joint Strategic Plan, Policy Framework and commensurate mission and vision statements.

Don't get me wrong—these are important parts of a functioning democracy and bureaucracy. USAID is always thinking about how to improve. New (and recycled) ideas and approaches can help us advance our development goals.

But at 59 years young, USAID knows a thing or two about the science, practice and discipline of development. And our career FSOs, seasoned in the field, know their tradecraft.

I am hopeful our incoming colleagues and leaders will recognize and respect this experience as USAID enters its seventh decade. ■

Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA USAID VP.
Contact: jay.carreiro@trade.gov

The New Year: An Opportunity to Think Differently

Here are a couple of things I've been thinking about as we approach 2021. I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Conflict Resolution. In November, my State VP colleague Tom Yazdgerdi wrote a great piece advocating the creation of an Office of Conflict Resolution within the State Department. The idea is to go beyond the Foreign Affairs Manual (3 FAM 4430) and create a nimbler approach to conflict resolution.

I think the Foreign Commercial Service should seriously consider such a proposal, as well. I urge you to read Tom's full article for the backstory.

Our current conflict resolution toolbox consists of the Equal Employment Opportunity and formal grievance processes afforded to members of the bargaining unit. Both systems are based on well-defined procedures and work well within their current, albeit limited, parameters.

Like State, FCS has its fair share of EEO cases and grievances. And like State, those cases often take a good deal of time and effort to resolve.

As Tom points out, however, not all issues rise to the level of a formal grievance or EEO case, nor should they. Garden-variety workplace conflict issues come to mind, which if left unaddressed often escalate. Suddenly, life at the office becomes barely tolerable.

Those issues deserve to be addressed quickly and resolved in a rational way. Therefore, going beyond 3 FAM 4430, as Tom suggests, is a worthy discussion to have, and I hope we can do it.

Let's Ask Retirees. I've been fortunate to keep in touch with a great group of former colleagues in the Washington, D.C., area. Every couple months we'd meet for lunch and discuss everything from The Beatles to the last curious decision made by the home office at 14th & Constitution.

Thanks to Zoom, the group has expanded beyond the metro area. However, the Commercial Service does a less-than-stellar job of keeping in touch with our alumni, much less consistently tapping their expertise, and I'm not sure why.

One of the things I enjoy most about our conversations is that our alumni are delightfully unencumbered by the burdens we active-duty types carry along with us. In other words, they're not afraid to share their opinions. There's an awful lot of collective knowledge—and even a little wisdom—amongst our alumni.

FCS should tap into this rich resource. I'd love to see FCS finally stand up a program for rehiring annuitants (like State's WAE program, now called REA, reemployed annuitants). It would be money well spent.

Perhaps we could start by inviting reemployed annuitants to participate in our selection boards, commissioning and tenure boards, designing our next assessment, conducting management performance reviews, or consulting on training programs.

The sky's the limit and the cost would be modest.

AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Nov. 18, 2020

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and social-distancing recommendations, the AFSA Governing Board met via teleconference on Nov. 18, 2020.

The board made the following decisions, which will need to be ratified at the next in-person Governing Board meeting, according to AFSA bylaws.

New Position: The board approved a second full-time State Department position on the Governing Board. (Currently, the AFSA State vice president is the only full-time AFSA State Department position.) Pending agreement with the State Department, AFSA will convert one of the six State representative slots into a 100-percent official time position. It will focus on Foreign Service specialist issues and will be included in the next AFSA electoral period, starting this summer (see "Call for Nominations: 2021-2023 AFSA Governing Board," p. 51).

Legal Defense Fund: The board approved payments of $33,394 related to a matter before Congress, and $8,842 for a USAID Equal Employment Opportunity case. It also approved committing up to $5,000 in an EEO case involving due process concerns.

2021 Budget: The board approved AFSA's 2021 budget of $5,573,787.

Advocacy in a New Administration

With a new administration taking office this month, AFSA's advocacy will focus on three broad areas to advance our mission of enhancing the effectiveness of the Foreign Service: The health of the Foreign Service as an institution; morale and retention in the Foreign Service as a career; and Foreign Service parity with the military and other government employees.

This focus will help AFSA protect the professional interests of our members, ensure the maintenance of high professional standards for both career diplomats and political appointees, and encourage understanding of the critical role of the Foreign Service in promoting America's national security and economic prosperity.

Here are some of AFSA's key policy priorities heading into the 117th Congress. Several are perennial issues for the Foreign Service, and others are specific to changes that have taken place in just the past few years.

Health of the Foreign Service as an institution.

- Reinstate Senior Foreign Service officers to positions historically held by them.
- Restore positions in the Foreign Service, both overseas and domestically.
- Promote diversity, inclusion and equality in the Foreign Service.
- Seize opportunities presented with the introduction of a modernized Foreign Service Act.

Morale and retention in the Foreign Service as a career.

- Ensure proper implementation of paid parental leave for the Foreign Service.
- Extend paid leave for medical and caregiving purposes to federal government employees.

(Note: Currently, the only federal policy that ensures access to time off to care for others is the Family Medical Leave Act, which guarantees eligible workers access to unpaid leave for up to 12 weeks in a 12-month period. Paid parental leave for federal employees was passed in 2020 but does not include any medical or caregiving leave.)

- Offer paid gap time for those in the Foreign Service to pursue education or other relevant professional experience.
- Maintain the Annuity Exception for the Foreign Service.

Foreign Service parity with the military and other government employees.

- Extend benefits offered by the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to the Foreign Service.
- Allow in-state tuition rates to be given both in the state of residence and in the state of domicile to members of the Foreign Service and their dependents.
- Reinstate the tax deductions for moving expenses eliminated in 2017.
- Implement the third tranche of overseas comparability pay funding for the Foreign Service.

AFSA has many new members of Congress to educate.

Perhaps the biggest opportunity for AFSA to influence the future of the Foreign Service in the next Congress will come from attempts to modernize the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

This potential reopening of the law would call for an offensive push of our policy priorities above, as well as defending against ideas that are not in the best interest of our members.

It would also bring the Foreign Service and U.S. diplomats to the forefront of the conversation in our main authorizing committees of jurisdiction—the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

AFSA has many new members of Congress to educate. We must explain what diplomats do and why it matters so the new wave of lawmakers will support our policy priorities, just as our longtime legislative champions have done.

Given such thin partisan margins in both the House and the Senate in the next Congress, AFSA expects there will need to be compromise between the political parties to pass any largescale legislation, including a 21st-century Foreign Service Act.

NEWS BRIEF

THE FUTURE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

AFSA was pleased to host a conversation on Nov. 19 with the co-authors of a new report—A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century—from Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

AFSA President Eric Rubin facilitated the discussion with Nicholas Burns, Marcie Ries and Marc Grossman, all retired ambassadors. More than 475 people attended the virtual event held on the Zoom platform. See p. 19 for excerpts of this discussion, and you can find the entire discussion linked on AFSA's YouTube page.

Call for Nominations
Continued from p. 51

descriptions for all officer positions, go to www.afsa.org/board.

Nomination Procedures

Nominating Candidates. Any AFSA regular member in good standing (i.e., a member whose dues are automatically deducted or who has paid dues as of Feb. 12, 2021) may nominate any person (including themselves) for any of the available positions for which the nominee is eligible. The following requirements apply to nominations:

1. No member may nominate more than one person for each officer position, or more than the number of representatives established for each constituency. No member's name may appear on the ballot for more than one position.

2. All nominations must be submitted in writing by letter or email. To be valid, they must, without exception, be received no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 12, 2021. All written nominations must be addressed to the AFSA Committee on Elections, 2101 E Street NW, Washington D.C. 20037. Email nominations must be sent to election@afsa.org.

3. Nominations may be submitted individually or in slates. To qualify as a slate, a proposed slate must have a minimum of four candidates from at least two constituencies. Slate designations will be noted on the ballot.

Qualifications for Governing Board Membership. Individuals meeting the following qualifications are eligible for nomination to one of the available positions:

1. The individual must be an AFSA regular member in good standing by Feb. 12, 2021, and remain in good standing through the election process and, if elected, for his or her term of office.

2. The individual must not have a conflict of interest as defined in Section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act. (Please see the "Conflicts of Interest" section below for more information.)

3. Active-duty members presenting themselves as candidates for president or constituency vice president must hold an active security clearance.

Conflicts of Interest. Section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act restricts employees serving in certain positions within their agencies from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board. Management officials and confidential employees, as well as those in positions that may raise or appear to raise a conflict of interest (as defined below) when the new Governing Board takes office on July 15, may not participate in Governing Board discussion, deliberations or decisions relating to labor-management issues. They may participate in AFSA Board activities that do not relate to labor-management issues. The Foreign Service Act also imposes a two-year pre- and post-AFSA "cooling off" period on employees who occupied or will occupy positions within their agency that involve labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs of a foreign affairs agency.

a. Section 1017(e) of the Act, 22 USC 4117(e) states: "Participation in labor organizations restricted. (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter (A) participation in the management of a labor organization for purposes of collective bargaining or acting as a representative of a labor organization for such purposes is prohibited under this subchapter (i) on the part of any management official or confidential employee; (ii) on the part of any individual who has served as a management official or confidential employee during the preceding two years; or (iii) on the part of any other employee if the participation or activity would result in a conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest or would otherwise be incompatible with law or with the official functions of such employee; and (B) service as a management official or confidential employee is prohibited on the part of any individual having participated in the management of a labor organization for purposes of collective bargaining or having acted as a representative of a labor organization during the preceding two years. (2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(A)(ii) and paragraph (1)(B), the term "management official" does not include (A) any chief of mission; (B) any principal officer or deputy principal officer; (C) any administrative or personnel officer abroad; or (D) any individual described in section 4102(12)(B), (C), or (D) of this title who is not involved in the administration of this subchapter or in the formulation of the personnel policies and programs of the Department."

b. Section 1002 (12), 22 USC 4102(12) of the Act defines a management official as "an individual who: is a chief of mission or principal officer; occupies a position of comparable importance to chief of mission or principal officer; is serving as a deputy to the foregoing positions; is assigned to the Office of the Inspector

AFSA is currently working on a proposal to convert one of the six State Representative positions into a 100 percent official time (i.e., full-time with AFSA) position, with a focus on specialist issues. Should this proposal be approved, AFSA will notify the State Department constituency of this change. We will then call for nominations that are specific to this special representative position.

General; or is engaged in labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs of a foreign affairs agency."

c. Section 1002 (6), 22 USC 4102(6) of the Act defines a confidential employee as "an employee who acts in a confidential capacity with respect to an individual who formulates or effectuates management policies in labor-management relations." Employees who may have a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest include those who are "engaged in personnel work in other than a purely clerical capacity" (for example, employees assigned to non-clerical positions within the Global Talent Management Bureau) and "employees engaged in criminal or national security investigations of other employees or who audit the work of individuals to ensure that their functions are discharged honestly and with integrity" (such as employees assigned to DS investigative units or those assigned to the OIG). See Section 1012(1) and (2), 22 USC 4112(1) and (2) of the Foreign Service Act.

As discussed above, the Foreign Service Act precludes these categories of individuals from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board.

The Foreign Service Act also imposes a two-year pre- and post- "cooling-off period" that restricts the movement of Foreign Service employees between certain positions on the AFSA Governing Board and certain Washington-based positions.

Pre-AFSA restrictions: Any individual who has served: 1) in a management position in Washington in which he or she has engaged in labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs; or 2) as a confidential employee to one of these management officials within two years prior to taking office in AFSA, is precluded from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board.

Post-AFSA restrictions: Employees who have participated in collective bargaining while serving on the AFSA Governing Board may not serve: 1) in a management position in Washington that involves labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs; or 2) as a confidential employee to such management positions, for two years after leaving AFSA. Members should consider these restrictions before deciding whether to run for AFSA Governing Board positions covered by these restrictions.

Please direct questions regarding this issue to Sharon Papp, General Counsel, by email: PappS@state.gov. All other election-related queries should be addressed to the Committee on Elections by email at election@afsa.org.

In addition to the above, due to AFSA efforts to educate Congress on issues related to Foreign Service conditions of employment, legislative proposals and other issues directly impacting the Foreign Service, employees serving in congressional fellowships may not serve on the AFSA Governing Board. A conflict or potential conflict of interest exists between their position in AFSA and their official duties. AFSA members serving as congressional fellows may run for the AFSA Governing Board provided their fellowship ends before the incoming board takes office on July 15, 2021.

Accepting a Nomination

1. Following receipt of nominations, an authorized representative of the Committee on Elections will promptly communicate with each nominee (excluding members who nominate themselves) to confirm their willingness to be a candidate. Nominees must confirm their acceptance in writing (using the same addresses indicated above under "Nominating Candidates") to the Committee on Elections no later than 5 p.m. EST on Feb. 19, 2021. Any nominee whose written acceptance of nomination is not received by the Committee on Elections by this time will be considered to have declined candidacy.

2. All candidates accepting a nomination must identify the position or positions they have filled for the past two years prior to accepting the nomination. All candidates not seeking a full-time AFSA position (President, State VP, USAID VP, FCS VP, FAS VP) must also identify the agency position they will be serving in beginning on July 15, 2021, when the Board takes office. This information is necessary to ensure compliance with Section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act.

Campaigning

1. Campaign Statements. All candidates will be given the opportunity to submit campaign statements for dissemination to AFSA members with the election ballots. Further information regarding such statements and editorial deadlines will be contained in the "Instructions to Candidates," which will be posted by the Committee on Elections at www.afsa.org/elections no later than Jan. 15, 2021.

2. Supplementary Statements.

Should candidates wish to mail supplementary statements to the membership, AFSA will make its membership mailing list or address labels available to the candidate upon request and at their expense. Further information on this and other campaign procedures will be included in the "Instructions to Candidates" mentioned above.

Continued on page 58

*Call for Nominations
Continued from p. 57*

3. Other Methods of Communication.

Department of Labor requirements prohibit individuals from using government or employer resources (including email accounts) to campaign for AFSA positions.

Voting

Ballots will be distributed on or about April 26, 2021, to each regular AFSA member as of March 26, 2021. Candidates or their representatives may observe the ballot distribution process if they so desire. Each member may cast one vote for President, Secretary, Treasurer and, in addition, one vote for a constituency Vice President and each Representative position in the member's constituency.

Regular members may cast their votes for candidates listed on the official ballot, or by writing in the name(s) of member(s) eligible as of Feb. 12, 2021, or by doing both. To be valid, a ballot must be received by 8 a.m. on June 10, 2021, either (i) at the address indicated on the envelope accompanying the ballot or (ii) by online vote. More detailed balloting instructions will accompany the ballots.

Vote Counting and Announcement of Results

On or about June 10, 2021, the Committee on Elections will oversee ballot tabulation and declare elected the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes for each position. Candidates or their representatives may be present during the tally and may challenge the validity of any vote or the eligibility of any voter. Note that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in-person ballot counting may assume a different form during this election cycle.

The committee will inform candidates individually of the election results by the swiftest possible means and will publish the names of all elected candidates in the next issue of *The Foreign Service Journal.* Elected candidates will take office on July 15, 2021, as mandated in the bylaws.

Committee on Elections members and supporting staff members may be reached at election@afsa.org.

Committee on Elections Members

Erin Nicholson (USAID, chair), Mort Dworken (retiree), Marcia Friedman (State), Dao M. Le (FCS), Rodney LeGrand (State).

Staff Members: Ásgeir Sigfússon, Executive Director; Sharon Papp, General Counsel.

Reaching New Audiences: A New Year Challenge

AFSA's public outreach campaign continues in the new year with renewed energy.

Since the campaign's official launch in September, we have been working to grow our networks of community colleges and strategic partners to broadcast our message about the importance and relevance of the work of the Foreign Service.

We called on members to mobilize and are impressed by the response: 40 have now been trained as messengers for the campaign. But we need more help, especially from retired members, if we are to achieve our goal of reaching new audiences.

To this end, AFSA is challenging retired members to reach out to at least one local community college and/or community organization and at least one outside of your own community (now that the world is virtual) with the offer to share your story and the work of the Foreign Service.

The champion(s) with the highest number of engagements—responses and scheduled or completed presentations—will be recognized by AFSA and admired by colleagues.

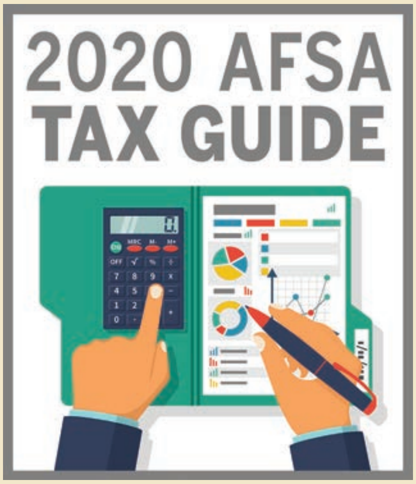
The challenge ends on May 7, Foreign Service Day. Please send your updates and activities to AFSA Strategic Messaging Coordinator Nadja Ruzica at ruzica@afsa.org.

For help getting started, please visit afsa.org/first-line-defense for helpful resources such as the Community College Finder. Please also visit our new webpage, designed for new audiences: afsa.org/about-foreign-service. Check out our latest video, Bringing Americans Home, on YouTube, at https://bit.ly/bringingamericanshome. And consider following AFSA on social media.

Through our joint efforts we build support for the Foreign Service, which is all the more important in this moment as the nation and the world consider the future of American diplomacy. Thank you for doing your part.

2020 Federal and State Tax Provisions for the Foreign Service

The American Foreign Service Association is pleased to present the 2020 Tax Guide, your first step to self-help for filing 2020 tax returns. This annual guide summarizes many of the tax laws that members of the Foreign Service community will find relevant, including changes mandated by new legislation.



The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic was an unwelcome surprise, but Congress took quick bipartisan action in the form of three new bills to support the U.S. economy and to help American families. Each bill was swiftly signed into law by the president. While we will not go into detail on each bill, we will discuss the resulting tax law changes that apply to the majority of our readers.

Although we try to be accurate, this article reviews complex tax issues affecting many individuals differently. Readers should always follow up with IRS product pages for each form and publication mentioned, which are designed as extensions of the PDF versions and instructions. Always check the applicability and "last reviewed" dates of these resources.

Even then, statutes and case law are the only completely authoritative sources. Many credits, deductions or other calculations (e.g., depreciation, foreign asset reporting or 1031 exchanges) are best done by a professional competent in that area. Consultations with a tax professional for complete answers to specific questions are recommended; readers cannot rely on this article or the IRS website as a justification for their position on a tax return.

In addition to highlights of new 2020 tax legislation affecting individuals, this year's article will also provide readers with information on tax issues affecting investments in real estate, capital gains, alimony, the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion (FEIE), filings related to foreign assets and income and other important topics relevant for 2020 tax returns. Following the federal section is the state-by-state guide, which includes information on state domicile, income tax rates and retirement incentives.

AFSA Senior Labor Management Adviser James Yorke (YorkeJ@state.gov), who compiles the Tax Guide, would like to thank Christine Elsea Mandojana, CPA, CFP® of CEM Global Tax Planning, LLC, and her team for preparing the section on federal tax provisions. Thanks also to Hallie Aronson, Esq., and Shannon Smith, Esq., of Withers Bergman, LLP, for their contributions, particularly regarding foreign accounts and asset reporting.

Filing Deadlines and Extensions

The deadline for filing 2020 individual income tax returns is April 15, 2021. U.S. citizens and resident aliens living outside the United States are allowed an automatic two-month extension for filing and paying federal taxes to June 15, 2021. To qualify for the June 15 automatic extension, a taxpayer must meet the following requirements: (1) on the regular tax return due date, the taxpayer is living outside of, and their main place of business or post is outside of, the United States and Puerto Rico (or the taxpayer is in the military or naval service on duty outside the United States or Puerto Rico); and (2) the taxpayer attaches a statement to the tax return specifying their qualifications for this automatic extension. Taxpayers claiming the extension should also write "taxpayer abroad" at the top of Form 1040. An additional extension to Oct. 15, 2021, may be obtained by filing Form 4868. Certain taxpayers claiming the FEIE on their federal tax return may qualify to extend their return using Form 2350 (instead of Form 4868) beyond the Oct. 15 deadline. Additionally, an extension to Dec. 15 may be available to certain overseas taxpayers who filed a Form 4868 but are unable to meet the Oct. 15 deadline due to certain qualifying circumstances. We recommend that you consult with a qualified tax professional before availing of these additional extensions. Taxpayers who take advantage of a federal extension must also check their state filing deadlines to avoid inadvertently missing them, because many states do not conform to the same federal extensions or extension deadlines.

Although the IRS should not charge interest or late payment penalties for returns filed under the June 15 automatic deadline, they often do. The taxpayer generally must call the IRS to have the interest or late penalties removed. For returns extended beyond June 15, however, the extension granted to the taxpayer is an extension to file but not to pay. As such, the IRS will charge late payment penalties and interest for payments made after the April 15 deadline. Most states will likewise charge late payment penalties and interest for tax payments made after the state's initial tax filing deadline.

Form 1040 Has Been Revised for 2020

As has been the case for decades, U.S. taxpayers must report "all income from whatever source derived" on IRS Form 1040, which has been revised again this year. Adjustments, deductions and credits remain matters of "legislative grace," so it is important to understand those statutes, regulations, forms and instructions when you claim a credit or deduction. The draft 2020 Form 1040 is similar to 2019 with some additions related to the COVID-19 legislation. Note that this article discusses the most recent draft as of the article publication date; the form may change before the final 2020 Form 1040 and accompanying schedules are approved.

Schedule 1: Report additional income and adjustments, such as tax refunds or credits; alimony received for certain divorces (discussed later in this article); unincorporated or single-member LLC business income or loss (see Schedule C); rental real estate, royalties or other pass-through business income (see Schedule E); unemployment compensation; and educator expenses.

Schedule 2: Report additional taxes such as the alternative minimum tax, self-employment tax and household employment taxes.

Schedule 3: Claim nonrefundable credits such as the foreign tax credit, credit for child and dependent care, and education credits.

The lettered schedules, commonly A through E, remain as follows:

(A) Itemized deductions, e.g., medical and dental expenses, deductible taxes and interest paid, gifts to charity, casualty losses from a federally declared disaster, and others. Taxpayers should file Schedule A only if their itemized deductions are higher than the standard deduction for the tax year.

(B) Interest, dividends, and foreign trusts and accounts.

(C) Profit or loss from business (sole proprietors and single-member LLCs).

(D) Capital gains and losses e.g., investment sales and certain capital gains from the sale of certain realty and virtual currency investments.

(E) Supplemental income and loss from rental real estate, royalties, partnerships, S corporations, estates and trusts.

Many other lettered schedules and incentive-specific forms (e.g., Form 8283 Noncash Charitable Contributions, Form 8889 Health Savings Accounts, Form 8938 Specified Foreign Financial Assets) and corresponding worksheets may be necessary. All are available from the IRS, most with corresponding product pages and instructions.

AFSA recommends that members review the IRS Form 1040 information webpage, "About Form 1040, U.S. Individual Income Tax Return"; the Form 1040 Instructions; Publication 17, "Your Federal Income Tax"; and this year's IRS Nationwide Income Tax Forums Online.

2020 Individual Income Tax Rates and Brackets

2020 Individual Income Tax Rates & Brackets				
Married Filing Jointly				
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Max Tax Per Individual Bracket	Max Possible Incremental Tax for Income Within Bracket Range
10%	$0	$19,750	$1,975	$1,975
12%	$19,751	$80,250	$7,260	$9,235
22%	$80,251	$171,050	$19,976	$29,211
24%	$171,051	$326,600	$37,332	$66,543
32%	$326,601	$414,700	$28,192	$94,735
35%	$414,701	$622,050	$72,573	$167,308
37%	$622,051	-	-	-
Head of Household				
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Max Tax Per Individual Bracket	Max Possible Incremental Tax for Income Within Bracket Range
10%	$0	$14,000	$1,400	$1,400
12%	$14,001	$53,700	$4,764	$6,164
22%	$53,701	$85,500	$6,996	$13,160
24%	$85,501	$163,300	$18,672	$31,832
32%	$163,301	$207,350	$14,096	$45,928
35%	$207,351	$518,400	$108,868	$154,796
37%	$518,401	-	-	-
Unmarried				
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Max Tax Per Individual Bracket	Max Possible Incremental Tax for Income Within Bracket Range
10%	$0	$9,875	$988	$988
12%	$9,876	$40,125	$3,630	$4,618
22%	$40,126	$85,525	$9,988	$14,606
24%	$85,526	$163,300	$18,666	$33,272
32%	$163,301	$207,350	$14,096	$47,368
35%	$207,351	$518,400	$108,868	$156,235
37%	$518,401	-	-	-

2021 Form W-4 Withholding Certificate

Taxpayers usually do not think to revise their Form W-4 withholdings until April or until they have paid their final 2020 taxes. Delaying a Form W-4 update may result in taxpayers withholding taxes on their wages based on an old calculation for several months of 2021. Don't wait. AFSA recommends readers revise their Form W-4 (using the new 2021 form) via their human resources office or through their employer's online portal (e.g., Employee Express for State Department employees) as soon as possible. Promptly doing so will help you avoid overwithholding or playing catch-up due to underwithholding for several months.

For help in calculating withholding, the IRS built a withholding estimator (www.irs.gov/W4App). Please note this estimator may not work well for taxpayers with rental properties, those claiming the FEIE or for those who potentially have other complicated tax issues in their returns. Taxpayers with these complications should complete the worksheets provided with Form W-4 and/or consult a tax professional.

Standard Deduction

The standard deduction has gone up slightly this year:

• $24,800 married filing jointly,

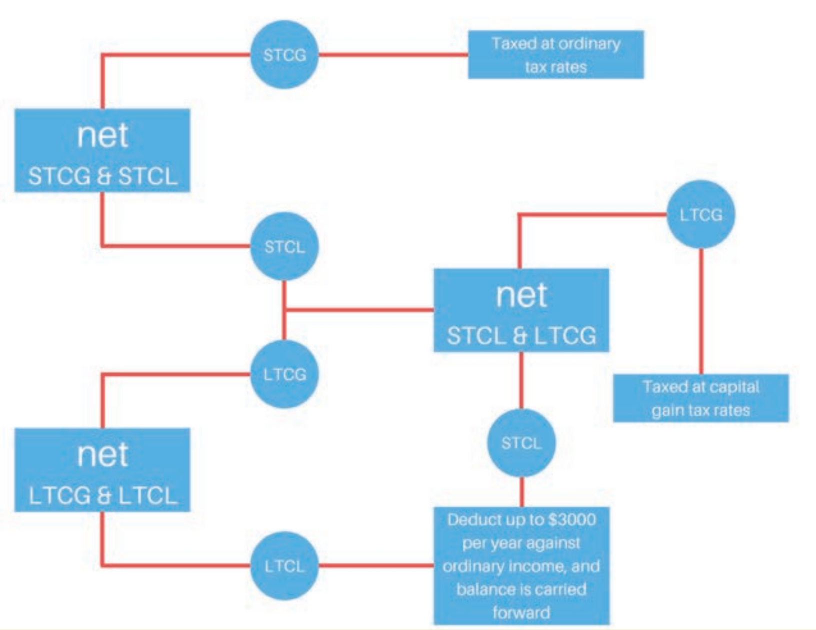
• $18,650 for heads of household, specifically defined by Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 2(b), and

• $12,400 for single taxpayers and married individuals filing separately.

The personal exemption remains $0 for 2020.

Capital Gains for Sale of Capital Assets Such as Stocks and Similar Securities

Determining the correct tax rate for capital gains requires taxpayers to first categorize their capital gains into short-term (gain from investments held for less than one year) and long-term (gain from investments held for one year or more). Next, taxpayers net their short-term capital gains (STCG) against their short-term capital losses (STCL), and their long-term capital gains (LTCG) against their long-term capital losses (LTCL). The results are taxed per the illustration below:



Any net LTCG that results from this netting process is taxed at the capital gains rates in the table below:

2020 Capital Gain Tax Rates & Brackets		
Single		
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
0%	$0	$74,749
15%	$74,750	$434,549
20%	$434,550+	
Married Filing Jointly or Qualified Widow		
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
0%	$0	$78,749
15%	$78,750	$488,849
20%	$488,850+	
Head of Household		
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
0%	$0	$78,749
15%	$78,750	$461,699
20%	$461,700+	
Married Filing Separately		
Bracket	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
0%	$0	$78,749
15%	$78,750	$244,424
20%	$244,425+	

There are exceptions to these rates for certain types of capital gains, such as Section 1202 qualified small business stock, net capital gains from collectibles and Section 1250 unrecaptured gains (explained in the investments in real estate section of this article).

Finally, and closely related, an additional 3.8-percent net investment income tax may apply to some forms of investment income, including some capital gains for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income (AGI) above:

• $250,000 for those married filing jointly or qualifying widow with a dependent child,

• $200,000 head of household or single, and

• $125,000 for those married filing separately.

Virtual Currency

In recent years, the IRS has placed increased scrutiny on virtual currency transactions. The draft 2020 Form 1040 illustrates this increased scrutiny by requiring taxpayers to confirm whether the taxpayer received, sold, exchanged or otherwise acquired any financial interest in any virtual currency during 2020. Additionally, virtual currency held in accounts outside the United States should be reported as a foreign asset on the FinCen114 (FBAR) and Form 8938 if reporting thresholds are met. In 2019 the IRS released guidance and FAQs related to virtual currency. These FAQs define virtual currency and provide guidance on taxable events related to virtual currency. The FAQs can be found here: https://bit.ly/virtual-currency-transactions.

AFSA recommends consulting IRS Notice 2014-21, Revenue Ruling 2019-24 and the FAQs to determine the tax treatment, if any, of a transaction.

Investments in Real Estate

Taxpayers generally invest in real estate in four scenarios:

Scenario 1: To live in as their personal residence.

Scenario 2: For use as a vacation home.

Scenario 3: To live in as their personal residence, but may rent it out at times when not living in it.

Scenario 4: To rent to a third party strictly for investment income purposes with no personal use.

Adjusted Basis

In all four scenarios, it is important to properly calculate the adjusted basis of the property. Please refer to Tax Topic 703; Publication 551; Form 1040 Schedule D with instructions; IRC Sections 1011, 1012 and 1014 through 1017; and associated tax regulations beginning at 26 CFR Sec. 1.1012-1. Recent iterations of the annual tax seminar offered by the Foreign Service Institute have illustrated how mistakes in tracking basis can result in incorrectly calculated depreciation of rental properties and incorrectly reported gain or loss from the sale of real estate.

Scenario 1: Personal Residence Never Rented

While living in the property as a personal residence, a taxpayer may deduct mortgage interest and property taxes as an itemized deduction on Schedule A, subject to limitations. Note that current tax law allows a taxpayer to deduct mortgage interest up to current mortgage limits ($750,000 unless the mortgage meets the requirements for grandfathered mortgage limit of $1 million) for up to two properties, a personal residence and a second home personally used by the taxpayer.

Scenario 2: Vacation Home

A vacation home is a second home aside from your personal residence that may be used by you for vacationing and may be rented out at times during the year. If you use the vacation home without renting it out, you may deduct the mortgage interest and property taxes on Schedule A, subject to limits as described in Scenario 1. If you rent out your vacation home for less than 15 days during the year, you are not required to report the rental income on your tax return and you may still deduct the mortgage interest and taxes on Schedule A. If you rent the vacation home out but use it personally for the greater of 14 days or 10 percent of the number of days rented, it is considered a personal residence and you may not deduct rental expenses greater than rental income. Mortgage interest and real estate taxes allocated to personal use are reported on Schedule A, subject to limitations. Mortgage interest, real estate taxes and other deductible expenses (including depreciation) allocated to rental use are reported on Schedule E using the vacation home rules.

Scenarios 3 and 4: Rental Property

Real estate that you purchase as a personal use home and then convert to rental status (or vice versa) and real estate that you purchase for immediate rental to a third party both have similar requirements for calculating depreciation during the rental period and for capital gain or loss calculations upon sale. During periods when the property is rented, the taxpayer must report the gross rental income received and deductible expenses on Schedule E. Please review the annual Foreign Service Institute Tax Seminar presented each February (available online at https://bit.ly/fsi-tax-seminar) for complications to consider when deciding which expenditures are immediately deductible and which expenditures must be capitalized and depreciated during rental use.

Depreciating Real Property Used to Produce Income

During periods when real estate is rented, the IRS requires the taxpayer to depreciate the property over the IRS-defined recovery period. To calculate annual depreciation, a taxpayer must know: (1) the property's adjusted cost basis and fair market value at time of rental conversion (the taxpayer must use the lower of the fair market value or adjusted basis as the depreciable basis); (2) adjustments to basis (tracked throughout the life of the property); (3) the date the property was placed in service as income-producing; and (4) the IRS-mandated depreciation method and convention. The IRS requires a taxpayer to depreciate buildings, certain land improvements and other types of capital assets—all annually. The IRS, however, prohibits a taxpayer from depreciating land, including the land on which a depreciable asset sits. So, land values must be accounted for separately. Property used for personal purposes may not be depreciated and claimed for tax purposes.

Taxpayers who believe they have sufficiently documented their property to begin using it for income-producing purposes should contact a tax professional to properly set up the property for tax reporting purposes, calculate deductible expenses (including depreciation), account for income derived from the property, and file correct tax forms on time each year. Failure to include the proper amount of depreciation on the Schedule E

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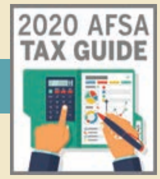

can result in an incorrect accounting method, which may require a change in accounting method (Form 3115) or an amended return, depending on the mistake made and/or the number of years depreciation was improperly reported on the Schedule E.

AFSA recommends also reading Tax Topics 703 (basis), 704 (depreciation) and 414 (rental property); the Schedule E and Form 1040 instructions; IRC Sections 167 (depreciation), 1012 (cost basis), 1011 (adjusted basis) and 1016 (adjustments to basis); associated basis and depreciation regulations; and Publications 527 and 946.

Selling a Principal Residence

Taxpayers who sell real estate used as a principal residence at some time during the taxpayer's ownership may qualify to exclude all or a portion of their net taxable capital gain under the provisions of IRC Section 121. A taxpayer who used the property as a principal residence and also rented the property can only exclude (if the qualifications are met) the non-IRC Section 1250 unrecaptured gain (see below) under IRC Section 121. IRC Section 121 allows a taxpayer to exclude up to $250,000 ($500,000 if married filing jointly) of long-term capital gain from the sale of a principal residence. To qualify for the full exclusion amount, the taxpayer: (1) must have owned the home and lived there at any time for at least two of the last five years before the date of the sale (but see Military Families Relief Act, below); (2) cannot have acquired the home in a 1031 exchange within the five years before the date of the sale; and (3) cannot have claimed this exclusion during the two years before the date of the sale.

An exclusion of gain for a fraction of these upper limits may be possible if one or more of the above requirements are not met. Taxpayers who sell their principal residence for a profit of more than $250,000 ($500,000 for married filing jointly) will owe capital gains tax on the excess. Additionally, capital gain attributed to periods of nonqualified use cannot be excluded under IRC Section 121. AFSA recommends Topic 701, Publication 523, IRC Section 121 and related regulations.

Military Families Tax Relief Act of 2003

According to the Military Families Tax Relief Act of 2003, the five-year period to qualify for the exclusion under IRC Section 121 may be suspended for members of the Foreign Service for up to 10 years during which the taxpayer has been on a qualifying Foreign Service assignment. This act also excludes periods of "qualified official extended duty" from nonqualified use treatment. In addition to the recommended reading from the previous section, AFSA recommends IRC Sec. 121(d)(9) and 26 CFR Section 1.121-5.

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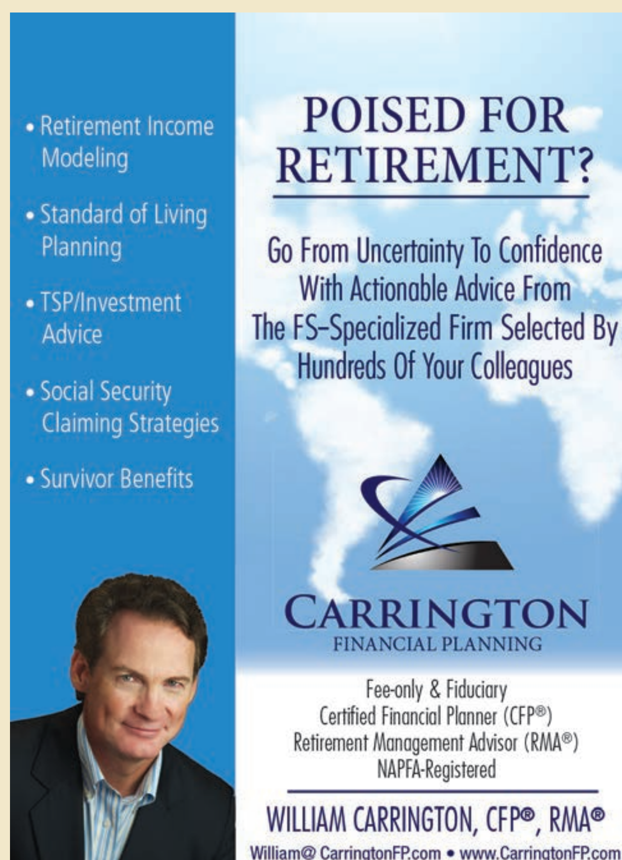


Selling a Property That Was Previously Rented

Taxpayers who sell a property that was used as a rental property at any time during the taxpayer's ownership must reduce the property's adjusted basis by the mandatory depreciation required during the rental period of the property before calculating the final net taxable capital gain from the property sale. The portion of the net capital gain created from the mandatory depreciation (whether or not claimed during the rental period(s)) is taxed as IRC Section 1250 unrecaptured gain and is not eligible for capital gain exclusion under IRC Section 121. The portion of the remaining net capital gain is eligible for exclusion under IRC Section 121 if all requirements are met. Due to the impact of IRC Section 1250 unrecaptured gain rules, taxpayers who sell a property that was previously rented often still have a tax bill due even if they qualify to exclude a portion of their net capital gain under IRC Section 121.

Non-Rental Business Use of Home

Although most Foreign Service families find themselves in government-funded housing overseas much of the time, some may own or rent property in the United States that they both occupy for personal purposes and use to operate a private business on the side. To qualify for a deduction for business-related expenses for a portion of a residence used for a business, a taxpayer must use a portion of their home exclusively and regularly as a principal place of business (and file a Schedule C). A taxpayer who meets that threshold must then either calculate the actual expenses of the home office—e.g., cost of a business phone line and part of state and local property taxes, utilities, mortgage interest and depreciation—or use the IRS' simplified method based on a flat rate for the square footage used for business (up to a maximum of 300 square feet). Also note that expenses incurred for the entire home, such as property taxes, must be prorated based on the percentage of the home used exclusively for the business if you choose the regular (not simplified) calculation. For more information, contact a professional and follow up with IRS Topic 509, Publication 587, the instructions for Form 8829, 1040 Schedule C, and IRC Sections 162, 212 and associated regulations.

Three Separate but Related Child and Dependent Credits

Child Tax Credit

A tax credit of up to $2,000 (limit of $1,400 refundable) per year is available for each qualifying child under age 17 for qualified taxpayers. This credit is claimed directly on Form 1040.

Other Dependent Credit

A separate but related Other Dependent Credit of up to $500 is available, often for those who do not meet the qualifying child requirement or with other dependent relatives. Calculate both the child tax credit and the other dependent credit on the Child Tax Credit and Credit for Other Dependents Worksheet. The worksheet and a flow chart for determining "Who Qualifies as Your Dependent?" are in the Form 1040 instructions for line 19. AFSA also recommends IRS Publication 5307, Publication 927, the instructions for Schedule 8812 (additional child tax credit) and IRC Section 24 for the Child Tax Credit and Other Dependent Credit.

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

Taxpayers with a qualifying dependent may be separately eligible for a credit for part of their child and dependent care expenses. To claim this credit for foreign care providers who do not have a U.S. taxpayer identification number (either a Social Security number or Employer Identification Number), enter "LAFCP" (Living Abroad Foreign Care Provider) on Form 2441 in the space for the care provider's taxpayer identification number. Taxpayers who utilize an FSAFEDS dependent care account to pay for qualifying childcare expenses must still file Form 2441 to report that they used the funds for qualifying child care. For taxpayers with two or more children who maxed out their FSAFEDS dependent care account contribution of $5,000, a credit calculated on up to an additional $1,000 of qualifying childcare expenses is available on Form 2441. Married taxpayers where one or both spouses exclude all their earned income with the FEIE will not qualify for this credit. AFSA recommends IRS Tax Topic 602, Form 2441 and instructions, as well as Form 1040 Schedule 3 and corresponding Form 1040 instructions.

For all three credits related to children and dependents, qualifying child and dependent rules can quickly become complex, especially in the case of divorce or separation.

Moving for a New Job & Retiring from Overseas Deductions Not Available Now

The personal costs incurred to move to a new job (IRC Section 217(j)) and for moving back to the United States after retiring from overseas are no longer deductible following amendments to the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Only active-duty members of the armed forces should use Form 3903 to calculate and deduct their moving expenses from their military moves. Visit the IRS web page "Moving Expenses to and from the United States," read Publication 521, and contact a professional to discuss future planning opportunities on these issues for 2026—the tax year many provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act sunset.

Official Relocation Under the Foreign Service Act Is Not Taxed (PCS, R&R, Medevac)

All travel authorized under Section 901 of the Foreign Service

Act, which includes permanent change of station (PCS), representational travel, R&R, emergency visitation travel and medevac, is exempt from taxation per IRC Sec. 912. Charleston General Financial Services (CGFS) secured advice from the IRS to this effect, which is consistent with IRS guidance issued in April 2018. None of these reimbursements appears on a W-2 for State Department employees. Non–State Department employees and anyone who doubts they are traveling under the Foreign Service Act should contact a professional to determine what relocation expenses may now be taxable.

Personally Incurred Expenses for Home Leave and R&R

Personal expenses paid by a direct-hire employee while on R&R are not tax deductible. Prior to the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, lodging, food and transportation expenses paid by an employee on official home leave were deductible on Schedule A as unreimbursed employee business expenses. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act eliminated the tax deduction for unreimbursed employee business expenses, so these expenses cannot be deducted until 2026 (filed April 2027). The Schedule A line 16 "other itemized deductions" section is not appropriate for deducting these expenses.

Representational & Official Residence Expenses

Certain Foreign Service employees receive a nontaxable allowance for representation expenses. If the actual expenses exceed the allowance, the excess expenses are not deductible under current tax law. Further, other Foreign Service employees incurring expenses related to their job may not deduct such expenses.

Alimony for Divorces, Settlements and Modifications

Alimony paid pursuant to agreements and orders entered into before Jan. 1, 2019, is deductible by the payor and taxed as income to the payee. Alimony payments paid pursuant to divorce or separation instruments entered into or modified after Dec. 31, 2018, are not deductible by the payor or taxed as income to the payee. Any modifications after Dec. 31, 2018, must explicitly state that the repeal of the alimony and maintenance rules will apply to the modification, otherwise the pre-2019 rules apply. Taxpayers should read Form 1040 Schedule 1, the Form 1040 Instructions and Tax Topic 452. Note the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 generally repealed IRC Section 71 and 26 CFR 1.71-1 for agreements entered into after Dec. 31, 2018.

Foreign Earned Income Exclusion (FEIE)

Taxpayers living and working overseas may be eligible for the FEIE. In 2020 the first $107,600 earned overseas as a non–U.S. government employee or self-employed person may be excluded from federal income taxes but not from self-employment taxes.

To qualify for this exclusion, the taxpayer must:

(1) Establish a tax home in a foreign country;

(2) Either (a) meet the "bona fide residence" test, or (b) meet the "physical presence" test; and

(3) File a Form 1040 tax return with Form 2555 for the year the FEIE is claimed.

Tax Home

The tax home is the general area of the taxpayer's "main place of business, employment or post of duty" (i.e., where the taxpayer is "permanently or indefinitely engaged to work as an employee or self-employed individual").

The U.S. Tax Court has explained that the congressional purpose of the FEIE is to offset duplicative costs of maintaining distinct U.S. and foreign households. Increasing ties to the foreign country by personally paying for a foreign household, paying local taxes, waiving diplomatic immunity for matters related to your job, paying for vacation travel back to the United States, becoming a resident of the foreign country and working in the foreign country long-term are other factors the federal courts have cumulatively recognized as establishing a foreign tax home.

Bona Fide Residence Test

The bona fide residence test is a facts and circumstances test aimed at assessing whether the taxpayer intends to make a home outside the United States for an indefinite period. This test requires that the taxpayer be a bona fide resident of a foreign country for an uninterrupted period that includes an entire tax year. The taxpayer may leave the foreign country for brief or temporary trips back to the United States (for periods not greater than six months in a calendar year) or elsewhere during the bona fide resident period but must have a clear intention of returning to the foreign country.

Physical Presence Test

The physical presence test requires that a taxpayer be present in a foreign country for at least 330 full (midnight-to-midnight) days during any 12 consecutive months (the 12-month period may be different from the tax year). Taxpayers who qualify for the physical presence test using a 12-month period other than a full calendar year are required to prorate the maximum exclusion allowed for that tax year. Travel days to and from the United States generally do not count toward the total for days inside the foreign country (they are considered U.S. days).

Other FEIE Considerations

AFSA understands that IRS auditors have denied the FEIE for Foreign Service spouses and dependents for failing to meet the bona fide residence or tax home elements of the EFIE tests. Members of the Foreign Service community have successfully used the physical presence test when bona fide residence cannot be established. Those who rely on physical presence should contemporaneously document travel days and retain copies of visas and tickets to substantiate their calculation.

As a response to the travel restrictions imposed due to COVID-19, the IRS issued Revenue Procedure 2020-27, which provides a temporary waiver of the time requirements under either the bona fide residence or the physical presence tests. The waiver applies to any taxpayer who reasonably expected to meet the time requirements but failed to do so due to COVID-19. Readers should review the Revenue Procedure in detail noting the specific date requirements and consult a qualified tax professional before claiming the time waiver on their 2020 tax return.

Taxpayers should note that the FEIE excludes the income from the bottom tax brackets, thus leaving remaining ordinary income on the return to be taxed at the higher tax brackets applicable to the return. Consequently, for certain married taxpayers, filing separately may result in a combined lower tax liability than filing jointly. We recommend that taxpayers consult with a qualified tax professional to ascertain the most advantageous filing status for each tax year.

Foreign Accounts and Asset Reporting

When a U.S. person (defined as a citizen, resident or Green Card holder) has offshore income, assets, accounts, pensions, trust and/or entities, U.S. income tax and reporting obligations can become a minefield of potential penalties. Many additional reporting forms apply to such taxpayers, but only a handful of accountants and tax attorneys have the expertise to identify which forms need to be completed and to do so correctly. The penalties for failing to file or making mistakes on such forms can be draconian.

U.S. persons are taxed on their worldwide income. Members of the Foreign Service must report a wide variety of offshore assets and activities on specific U.S. reporting forms, even if such activities occur abroad. For example, U.S. persons with ownership or signature authority over a foreign bank account of any value must denote this interest in Part III of Schedule B of Form 1040. This often-overlooked section is not only part of the signed 1040 (under penalty of perjury), but it also lets the IRS know whether to expect a Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts Report (FBAR) from that taxpayer. A misstatement on Schedule B can be used by the IRS against the taxpayer when assessing reporting penalties.

The separately filed FBAR (via the BSA e-filing system) is essential. Penalties associated with failing to file or filing an erroneous FBAR are enormous. This form is required from taxpayers with non-U.S. bank accounts and other offshore assets (including some life insurance policies and pensions) that have an aggregate value of more than $10,000 at any time during the year. Failing to report a financial asset on an FBAR can lead to penalties ranging from $12,921 per account, per year (for an accidental, nonwillful error) up to the greater of $129,210 or 50 percent of each account balance, per account, per year (for a more serious offense, such as one coupled with a misstatement on Schedule B or where an investment account was reported but a pension account missed). Willful failures and errors can result in additional penalties and even jail time. These and other penalties for failing to file foreign asset reporting forms can be greater than the value of the assets for which they are filed.

Taxpayers with interests in certain foreign financial assets must also file Form 8938 if the total value of such assets exceeds the applicable statutory reporting threshold (e.g., for unmarried persons living in the United States, more than $50,000 on the last day of the tax year or more than $75,000 at any time during the tax year). Errors relating to this form may result in penalties in excess of $10,000 per year. In addition, the statute of limitations for assessment on a foreign asset reporting form remains open for three years after the date on which the form is ultimately filed, not from when it was due.

Additional tax forms must be filed by taxpayers who:

(1) have interests in or engage in transactions with offshore entities, trusts and pensions;

(2) have investments in foreign mutual funds;

(3) receive substantial gifts from non-U.S. persons; and

(4) wish to claim the benefit of a treaty-based return position.

Many of these reporting forms must be filed even if they have no impact on tax liability.

Qualified Business Income Deduction (QBID)

In an attempt to equalize the taxes paid by sole proprietorships and pass-through entities with those paid by C corporations, the TCJA created a deduction for up to 20 percent of qualified business income (QBI), qualified real estate investment trusts (REIT) income, and publicly traded partnership income. Calculate the QBID on Form 8995, for which the associated instructions are essential.

Pass-through entities such as S Corporations, LLCs and sole proprietorships can claim this deduction, but pay attention to pass-through requirements (e.g., via K-1s) and do not double dip by taking the deduction at the entity level as well as the individual level through the K-1. Business income earned outside the United States is not QBI—the income must be earned in a U.S. trade or business. Although "trade or business" is not specifically defined in the Internal Revenue Code, tax courts have taken a facts and circumstances approach in deciding whether an activity is a trade or business. If a taxpayer is renting out their personal residence while overseas, it is generally not a trade or business for QBID purposes unless the taxpayer's main source of income and/or main employment activity is from renting and managing rental real estate. Some trusts and estates may be eligible for the QBID, however, income earned as an employee of a C Corporation does not qualify. The Code specifies that certain trades and businesses, such as law firms, accounting firms and consulting businesses, do not qualify for the QBID unless the taxpayer's taxable income is under certain thresholds ($326,600 for MFJ and $163,300 for all other returns). Other complicated limits and requirements may apply.

Federal Estate and Gift Taxes

In 2020, the first $11.58 million of a decedent's aggregate estate (up to $23.16 million for a surviving spouse with a portability election on Form 1041) was exempt from the federal estate tax. The same amounts apply to (and are reduced by) lifetime gift-giving over the annual gift exclusion, which is $15,000 per donee ($30,000 for gifts split by married couples on Form 709). Other limits apply to gifts to non-U.S. citizens or gifts between spouses where both spouses are not U.S. citizens.

Those who contribute to 529 Education Savings Plans should note that such a contribution is considered a completed gift and is applied to that taxpayer's annual gift exclusion for the donee. Taxpayers interested in front-loading a 529 plan to maximize their tax-free earnings can select a five-year contribution option allowing them to contribute in one tax year up to the annual gift tax exclusion ($15,000 for 2020) for five years ($75,000 maximum for 2020). Taxpayers choosing this five-year option must file a Form 709 Gift Tax Return and select the five-year election.

Retirement Savings in TSP, 401(k)s and IRAs

Individuals may contribute up to $19,500 to 401(k) plans, the Thrift Savings Plan and 403(b) plans in 2020. Taxpayers age 50 and older may make additional catch-up contributions of $6,500 to their qualified employer workplace retirement plan. The 2020 Traditional IRA and Roth contribution limits (in total) are $6,000 for those under age 50 and $7,000 for those age 50 and over. The 2020 tax year deadline for contributing to a Roth IRA or Traditional IRA is April 15, 2021. The IRS charges a penalty for ROTH or IRA contributions over the allowed limits. Over-contributions for the tax year being filed, however, may be removed without penalty by the filing due date (with extensions) of the tax return. Contributions to a 401(k), TSP or 403(b) plan may be made only via payroll deductions, the last of which is possible during the last pay period paid by December 31, 2020. Married filing jointly self-employed spouses working outside the United States who elect the FEIE can make a spousal Roth or Traditional IRA contribution as permitted by income thresholds. Taxpayers with modified AGI above the permitted threshold for a Roth contribution may want to consider a back-door Roth contribution strategy.

Itemized Deductions Still Allowed via Schedule A

Although the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act removed the overall cap for itemized deductions, it suspended miscellaneous itemized deductions, to the extent they exceed 2 percent of AGI, through 2025. Schedule A and the instructions are the best guide for what remains deductible for itemizers. The following three sections provide 2020 updates on a few often-used itemized deductions.

1) Medical and Dental: Deduct for Expenses Over 7.5 Percent of AGI

The 2020 deduction for unreimbursed medical and dental expenses is possible only to the extent qualifying expenses exceed 7.5 percent of a taxpayer's AGI. This 7.5 percent threshold is set to expire after 2020, but Congress could extend it again for 2021. AFSA recommends that members claiming these deductions read IRS Publication 502, Tax Topic 502 and IRC Section 213.

2) Taxes, Including State and Local Property

The TCJA limits itemized deductions for state and local property taxes to $10,000 ($5,000 for married filing separately). For more on these provisions, refer to IRS Notice 2019-12, Treasury Decision 98-64, 26 CFR Section 1-170A-1(h)(3), Tax Topic 503 and IRC Sections 164, 170(c).

3) Charitable Contributions

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act increased the charitable contribution deduction to 100 percent (from 60 percent) of a taxpayer's income base for 2020. Contributions must be made to a qualified organization (e.g., a Section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organized in the U.S.). Taxpayers are required to retain documentary evidence (e.g., canceled check or written communication from the charity) for all cash contributions. Additionally, an official tax receipt is required for any single cash contribution of $250 or more to a qualifying tax-exempt organization. Non-cash contributions require a receipt regardless of the value of the non-cash contribution. For non-cash contributions of $250 or more, the charity must provide a receipt along with an additional acknowledgment stating whether any goods or services were given in return for the donation. For non-cash contributions totaling in excess of $500, the taxpayer must complete Form 8283 (Non-cash Charitable Contributions) and attach it to their Form 1040. Contributions over $5,000 require a written appraisal.

For more information, AFSA recommends Tax Topic 506, Publication 526, Publication 1771, the Schedule A and Form 1040 instructions and IRC Section 170.

Under the CARES Act, taxpayers who do not itemize may take an above-the-line deduction to reduce taxable income for up to a $300 cash donation made in 2020 to a qualified charitable organization, except for donations to a donor-advised fund or to a 509(a)(3) charity. Taxpayers should refer to the CARES Act or their tax adviser for the specific requirements.

Health Care Savings Account (HSA) and Flexible Savings Account (FSA)

In 2020, Foreign Service employees covered by a self-only high-deductible insurance plan may contribute up to $3,550 to an HSA. Individuals with family high-deductible insurance coverage may contribute up to $7,100 for 2020.

Distinct from an HSA, an FSA is a tax-advantaged account allowing an employee to contribute pre-tax wages to pay for qualifying medical expenses. The maximum pre-tax salary contribution to an FSA for 2020 is $2,750. Withdrawals used to pay qualifying medical expenses are not taxed, and limited unused amounts can be rolled over from year to year with a proper election.

The CARES Act expanded the definition of qualifying medical expenses to include feminine hygiene products and over-the-counter medications purchased after Dec. 31, 2019. This expanded definition allows taxpayers to withdraw funds from HSAs or FSAs (such as the FSAFEDS for health care) to pay for these expenses. AFSA recommends Publication 969, the Form 8889 instructions and the FSA Feds website.

Summary of COVID-19 Specific Law Changes

The various pieces of legislation passed by Congress in response to COVID-19 are extensive and voluminous. Below is a short summary of tax legislation most likely to have an impact on members of the Foreign Service.

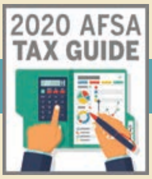
(1) Economic impact payment: Taxpayers who are U.S. citizens or resident aliens (and who have a valid Social Security number) are entitled to a refundable income tax credit of $1,200 ($2,400 for married couples filing a joint return). A $500 credit is also allowed for each qualifying child of the taxpayer. The credit is phased out based on AGI and eliminated for taxpayers with AGI exceeding $75,000 ($150,000 for joint returns). Many eligible taxpayers have already received this impact payment. Their eligibility for the payment was based on their 2019 tax return or, if not yet filed, their 2018 tax return. It is important to note that actual eligibility will be recalculated on the 2020 tax return. If a taxpayer qualifies for a higher payment (e.g., because 2020 taxable income was lower than prior year taxable income), they will receive the additional credit on their 2020 return. If, based on 2020 income, the taxpayer was not eligible for part or all of a previously received stimulus payment, the taxpayer will not be required to return the payment.

(2) Retirement fund distributions: The 10-percent early withdrawal penalty for early qualified retirement plan withdrawals such as those from the TSP, a 401(k) or other similar plan is waived for COVID-19 related distributions up to $100,000 made in 2020. The legislation provides for repayment of the COVID-19 distribution or allows taxpayers to pay the tax on the withdrawal ratably over three years. Readers should refer to the CARES Act or consult a tax professional as the tax treatment of repayments depends on the type of retirement fund and the nature of the repayment.

(3) Payroll tax deferrals: An August 2020 presidential memorandum directed the U.S. Treasury to allow employers to defer withholding, deposit and payment of certain payroll taxes. According to IRS Notice 2020-65, employers have the option to defer the withholding of the employee's share of payroll taxes on wages paid during the period between Sept. 1, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2020. The deferral is only for those employees meeting the wage threshold of net wage income less than $4,000 for a biweekly pay period (or an equivalent amount if paid on a different pay period). The net wage threshold determination is made separately for each pay period and only applies for the pay period the net wages are less than $4,000. Any employer opting to use this deferral will be required to withhold the deferred payroll taxes on a ratable basis from the employee's wages paid between Jan. 1, 2021, and April 30, 2021.

Conclusion

Minor changes were made to Form 1040 and the numbered schedules for 2020. The legislation resulting from COVID-19 offers a few tax incentives that must be addressed on the 2020 Form 1040; but for the most part, few significant tax law changes will affect 2020 returns. While AFSA encourages its members to continue their tax education by reading the Internal Revenue Code, IRS regulations and referenced IRS publications, there is no substitute for professional help for specific questions, particularly for complex international income and assets issues. Though not comprehensive, we hope this guide provides a useful summary of the significant tax laws and updates that may have an impact on your 2020 tax returns. Best wishes as you prepare your 2020 returns, and here's to a less eventful 2021!



STATE TAX PROVISIONS

Liability: Every employer, including the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies, is required to withhold state taxes for the location where the employee either lives or works. Employees serving overseas, however, must maintain a state of domicile in the United States where they may be liable for income tax; the consequent tax liability that the employee faces will vary greatly from state to state.

Further, the many laws on taxability of Foreign Service pensions and annuities also vary by state. This section briefly covers both those situations. (In addition, see separate box on state tax withholding for State employees, and we encourage you to read the CGFS Knowledge Base article on the Tax Guide page of the AFSA website.)

Domicile and Residency

There are many criteria used in determining which state is a citizen's domicile. One of the strongest determinants is prolonged physical presence, a standard that Foreign Service personnel frequently cannot meet due to overseas service. In such cases, the states will make a determination of the individual's income tax status based on other factors, including where the individual has family ties, has been filing resident tax returns, is registered to vote, has a driver's license, owns property or where the person has bank accounts or other financial holdings.

For purposes of this article, the term "domicile" refers to legal residence; some states also define it as permanent residence. "Residence" refers to physical presence in the state. Foreign Service personnel must continue to pay taxes to the state of domicile (or to the District of Columbia) while residing outside the state, including during assignments abroad, unless the state of residence does not require it.

Members are encouraged to review the Overseas Briefing Center's guide to Residence and Domicile, available on AFSA's website at www.afsa.org/domicile.

Domestic Employees in the D.C. Area

Foreign Service employees residing in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area are generally required to pay income tax to the District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia, in addition to paying tax to the state of their domicile.

Virginia and Maryland require tax returns from most temporary residents as well. Most states allow a credit, however, so that the taxpayer pays the higher tax rate of the two states, with each state receiving a share.

We recommend that you maintain ties with your state of domicile—by, for instance, continuing to also file tax returns in that state if appropriate—so that when you leave the D.C. area for another overseas assignment, you can demonstrate to the District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia your affiliation to your home state.

Also, if possible, avoid using the D.C. or Dulles, Virginia,

TAX WITHHOLDING WHEN ASSIGNED DOMESTICALLY

The State Department withholds an employee's state taxes according to his or her "regular place of duty" when assigned domestically—for details, see "New Procedures for Withholding and Reporting Employees' State and District of Columbia Income Taxes," Announcement No. 22394 (Nov. 4, 2014; available via the intranet). This announcement reflects some jurisdictions' imposition of income taxes on nonresidents who derive income within their boundaries despite residence or domicile elsewhere.

Members residing or domiciled in a jurisdiction other than the one in which they earn income may need state taxes to be withheld for their residence and domicile jurisdictions. If you reside or are domiciled in a jurisdiction other than that of your regular place of duty, you may secure an exemption from this withholding method by satisfying the requirements detailed by CGFS Knowledgebase (available via the intranet at http://kb.gfs.state.gov/) Issue 39479.

Note that the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services does not adjudicate state income tax elections when you are serving overseas, since in those circumstances, it is the employee's responsibility to accurately designate a state for which income taxes will be withheld. Upon the employee's return to a domestic assignment, however, CGFS will evaluate the employee's state tax withholding election based on his or her new official domestic duty station pursuant to Announcement No. 22394.

Finally, this determination does not mean that you must relinquish your state of domicile if it is different from your official duty station. "Domicile" and "residence" are different from "regular place of duty." As long as you maintain your ties to your home state, you will be able to change your withholding back, if you wish, to your home state when you go overseas. See the Overseas Briefing Center's guide to Residence and Domicile, available on AFSA's website at www.afsa.org/domicile.

pouch zip code as your return address on your federal return because, in some cases, the D.C. and Virginia tax authorities have sought back taxes from those who have used this address.

States That Have No Income Tax

There are currently seven states with no state income tax: Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and Wyoming. In addition, New Hampshire and Tennessee have no tax on earned income, but do tax profits from the sale of bonds and property.

States That Do Not Tax Nonresident Domiciliaries

There are nine states that, under certain conditions, do not tax income earned while the taxpayer is outside the state: California, Connecticut, Idaho, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania (but see entry for Pennsylvania below) and West Virginia. The requirements for all except California, Idaho and Oregon are that the individual should not have a permanent "place of abode" in the state, should have a permanent "place of abode" outside the state, and should not be physically present for more than 30 days during the tax year. California allows up to 45 days in the state during a tax year.

All 10 states require the filing of nonresident returns for all income earned from in-state sources. Foreign Service employees should also keep in mind that states could challenge the status of overseas government housing in the future.

The "State Overviews" section, below, gives brief state-by-state information on tax liability, with addresses provided for further information or tax forms. Tax rates are provided where possible.

As always, members are advised to double-check with their state's tax authorities. While AFSA makes every attempt to provide the most up-to-date information, readers with specific questions should consult a tax expert in the state in question. We provide the website address for each state's tax authority in the state-by-state guide, and an email address or link where available. Some states do not offer email customer service.

We also recommend the Tax Foundation website at www.taxfoundation.org, which provides a great deal of useful information, including a table showing tax rates for all states for 2020 at https://taxfoundation.org/publications/state-individual-income-tax-rates-and-brackets/.

COVID-19 and State Tax Obligations for the Employee

The employee and employer need to track all the employee's working locations in order to make sure they comply with all state tax obligations. When taxpayers live in one state but work in another, they may have tax liability in both states. Certain tax credits are available to minimize taxation of the same income in two different states. Occasionally, neighboring states have reciprocity agreements that dramatically simplify income tax filing obligations for taxpayers. U.S. government employees who telework in a state temporarily due to COVID-19 will most likely trigger additional state tax reporting unless the employee's specific fact pattern does not require the employee to pay taxes in the state or the state enacted legislation to address COVID-19 specific teleworking or temporary stays in the state.

STATE OVERVIEWS

ALABAMA

Individuals domiciled in Alabama are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Alabama's individual income tax rates range from 2 percent on taxable income over $500 for single taxpayers and $1,000 for married filing jointly, to 5 percent over $3,000 for single taxpayers and $6,000 for married filing jointly.

Write: Alabama Department of Revenue, 50 N. Ripley, Montgomery AL 36104.

Phone: (334) 242-1170, Option #1

Website: https://revenue.alabama.gov

Email: Link through the website, About Us then Email Us.

ALASKA

Alaska does not tax individual income or intangible or personal property. It has no state sales and use, franchise or fiduciary tax. However, some municipalities levy sales, property and use taxes.

Write: Tax Division, Alaska Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 110420, Juneau AK 99811-0420.

Phone: (907) 465-2320

Website: www.tax.state.ak.us

ARIZONA

Individuals domiciled in Arizona are considered residents and are taxed on any income that is included in the Federal Adjusted Gross Income, regardless of their physical presence in the state. Arizona's tax rate ranges in five brackets from a minimum of 2.59 percent to a maximum of 4.54 percent of taxable income over $318,000 married filing jointly or $159,000 for single filers.

Write: Arizona Department of Revenue, Customer Care, P.O. Box 29086, Phoenix AZ 85038-9086.

Phone: (602) 255-3381

Website: www.azdor.gov

Email: taxpayerassistance@azdor.gov

ARKANSAS

Individuals domiciled in Arkansas are considered residents and are taxed on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. The Arkansas tax rate ranges in six brackets from a minimum of 2.0 percent to a maximum of 6.6 percent of net taxable income over $79,300.

Write: Department of Finance and Administration, Income Tax Section, P.O. Box 3628, Little Rock AR 72203-3628.

Phone: (501) 682-1100

Website: www.arkansas.gov/dfa

Email: individual.income@dfa.arkansas.gov

CALIFORNIA

Foreign Service employees domiciled in California must establish nonresidency to avoid liability for California taxes (see Franchise Tax Board Publication 1031). However, a "safe harbor" provision allows anyone who is domiciled in state but is out of the state on an employment-related contract for at least 546 consecutive days to be considered a nonresident. This applies to most FS employees and their spouses, but members domiciled in California are advised to study FTB Publication 1031 for exceptions and exemptions. The California tax rate for 2020 ranges in eight brackets from 1 percent of taxable income under $8,809 for singles and $17,618 for joint filers, to a maximum of 12.3 percent on taxable income over $590,742 for singles and $1,181,484 for joint filers. Nonresident domiciliaries are advised to file on Form 540NR.

Write: Personal Income Taxes, Franchise Tax Board, P.O. Box 942840, Sacramento CA 94240-0040.

Phone: (800) 852-5711 (inside the U.S.); (916) 845-6500 (outside the U.S.)

Website: www.ftb.ca.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

COLORADO

Individuals domiciled in Colorado are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Colorado's tax rate is a flat 4.63 percent of federal taxable income, plus or minus allowable modifications.

Write: Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Service Division, P.O. Box 17087 Denver CO 80217-0087.

Phone: (303) 238-7378

Website: Tax.Colorado.gov

Email: DOR_TaxpayerService@state.co.us

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut domiciliaries may qualify for nonresident tax treatment under either of two exceptions as follows: Group A—the domiciliary 1) did not maintain a permanent place of abode inside Connecticut for the entire tax year; and 2) maintains a permanent place of abode outside the state for the entire tax year; and 3) spends not more than 30 days in the aggregate in the state during the tax year.

Group B—the domiciliary 1) in any period of 548 consecutive days, is present in a foreign country for at least 450 days; and 2) during the 548-day period, is not present in Connecticut for more than 90 days; and 3) does not maintain a permanent place of abode in the state at which the domiciliary's spouse or minor children are present for more than 90 days.

Connecticut's tax rate for married filing jointly rises from 3 percent on the first $20,000 in six steps to 6.9 percent of the excess over $500,000, and 6.99 percent over $1,000,000. For singles, it is 3 percent on the first $10,000, rising in six steps to 6.9 percent of the excess over $250,000 and 6.99 percent over $500,000.

Write: Department of Revenue Services, 450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 1, Hartford CT 06103.

Phone: (860) 297-5962

Website: www.ct.gov/drs

Email: Contact through the Contact Us page on the website.

DELAWARE

Individuals domiciled in Delaware are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Delaware's graduated tax rate rises in six steps from 2.2 percent of taxable income under $5,000 to 6.6 percent of taxable income over $60,000.

Write: Division of Revenue, Taxpayers Assistance Section, State Office Building, 820 N. French St., Wilmington DE 19801.

Phone: (302) 577-8200

Website: www.revenue.delaware.gov

Email: DOR_PublicService@delaware.gov

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Individuals domiciled in the District of Columbia are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence there. Individuals domiciled elsewhere are also considered residents for tax purposes for the entire portion of any tax year in which they are physically present in the district for 183 days or more. (See 2019 D-40 tax instruction booklet.) The district's tax rate is 4 percent if income is less than $10,000; 6 percent between $10,000 and $40,000; 6.5 percent between $40,000 and $60,000; 8.5 percent between $60,000 and $350,000; 8.75 percent between $350,000 and $1,000,000; and 8.95 percent over $1,000,000.

Write: Office of Tax and Revenue, Customer Service Center, 1101 4th St. SW, Suite 270 West, Washington DC 20024.

Phone: (202) 727-4829

Website: www.otr.cfo.dc.gov

Email: taxhelp@dc.gov

FLORIDA

Florida does not impose personal income, inheritance, gift or intangible personal property taxes. Property tax (homestead) exemptions are only available if you own and permanently reside on the property. Sales and use tax is 6 percent. There are additional county sales taxes that could make the combined rate as high as 9.5 percent.

Write: Taxpayer Services, Florida Department of Revenue, 5050 W. Tennessee St., Bldg. L, Tallahassee FL 32399-0100.

Phone: (850) 488-6800

Website: floridarevenue.com/taxes

Email: Use "Ask a Tax Question" on the Contact page of the website.

GEORGIA

Individuals domiciled in Georgia are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Georgia's tax rate rises in six steps to a maximum of 5.75 percent of taxable income over $10,000 and above for joint married filers and $7,000 for single filers.

Write: Georgia Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Services Division, 1800 Century Blvd. NE, Atlanta GA 30345-3205.

Phone: (877) 423-6711, Option #2; or contact through Georgia Tax Center (log-in required)

Website: http://dor.georgia.gov/taxes

HAWAII

Individuals domiciled in Hawaii are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Hawaii's tax rate is 1.4 percent on taxable income below $2,400 for single filers and $4,800 for joint filers, rising in 12 steps to a maximum of 11.00 percent for taxable income above $200,000 for single filers and $400,000 for joint filers.

Write: Oahu District Office, Taxpayer Services Branch, P.O. Box 259, Honolulu HI 96809-0259.

Phone: (800) 222-3229 or (808) 587-4242

Website: http://tax.hawaii.gov

Email: Taxpayer.Services@hawaii.gov

IDAHO

Individuals domiciled in Idaho for an entire tax year are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income. However, you are considered a nonresident if: 1) you are an Idaho resident who lived outside Idaho for at least 445 days in a 15-month period; and 2) after satisfying the 15-month period, you spent fewer than 60 days in Idaho during the year; and 3) you did not have a personal residence in Idaho for yourself or your family during any part of the calendar year; and 4) you did not claim Idaho as your federal tax home for deducting away-from-home expenses on your federal return; and 5) you were not employed on the staff of a U.S. senator; and 6) you did not hold an elective or appointive office of the U.S. government other than the armed forces or a career appointment in the U.S. Foreign Service (see Idaho Code Sections 63-3013 and 63-3030). Idaho's tax rate rises in six steps from a minimum of 1.125 percent to a maximum of 6.925 percent on the amount of Idaho taxable income over $11,554 for singles and $23,108 for married filers. A nonresident must file an Idaho income tax return if his or her gross income from Idaho sources is $2,500 or more.

Write: Idaho State Tax Commission, P.O. Box 36, Boise ID 83722-0410.

Phone: (800) 972-7660 or (208) 334-7660

Website: www.tax.idaho.gov

Email: taxrep@tax.idaho.gov

ILLINOIS

Individuals domiciled in Illinois are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Illinois charges a flat rate income tax rate for individuals of 4.95 percent of net income.

Write: Illinois Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 19014, Springfield IL 62794-9014.

Phone: (800) 732-8866 or (217) 782-3336

Website: www.revenue.state.il.us

Email: REV.TA-IIT@illinois.gov

INDIANA

Individuals domiciled in Indiana are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Indiana's tax rate is a flat 3.23 percent of Federal Adjusted Gross Income. Several counties also charge a county income tax.

Write: Indiana Department of Revenue, Individual Income Tax, P.O. Box 7207, Indianapolis IN 46207-7207.

Phone: (317) 232-2240

Website: www.in.gov/dor

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

IOWA

Individuals domiciled in Iowa are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income to the extent that income is taxable on the person's federal income tax returns. Iowa's 2020 tax rate rises in eight steps from 0.33 percent to a maximum 8.53 percent of taxable income over $74,970, for both single and joint filers.

Write: Taxpayer Services, Iowa Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 10457, Des Moines IA 50306-0457.

Phone: 515-281-3114 or 800-367-3388

Website: https://tax.iowa.gov/

Email: Use email form on Contact Us page of the website.

KANSAS

Individuals domiciled in Kansas are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Kansas' tax rate is 3.1 percent on Kansas taxable income under $15,000 for single filers and under $30,000 for joint filers, rising to 5.7 percent on income over $30,000 for single filers and $60,000 for joint filers.

Write: Kansas Taxpayer Assistance Center, Scott State Office Building, 120 SE 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612-1103.

Phone: (785) 368-8222

Website: www.ksrevenue.org

Email: kdor_tac@ks.gov

KENTUCKY

Individuals domiciled in Kentucky are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Kentucky's tax rate is a flat 5 percent.

Write: Kentucky Department of Revenue, 501 High Street, Frankfort KY 40601.

Phone: (502) 564-4581

Website: www.revenue.ky.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

LOUISIANA

Individuals domiciled in Louisiana are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Louisiana's tax rate is 2 percent for the first $12,500 for single filers or $25,000 for joint filers, 4 percent over $12,500 for singles and over $25,000 for joint filers, and 6 percent for over $50,000 for single filers or $100,000 for joint filers.

Write: Taxpayer Services Division, Individual Income Tax Section, Louisiana Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 201, Baton Rouge LA 70821-0201.

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10303 Greenwood Place
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Phone: (703) 938-0074
Email: mcgfin@verizon.net

Phone: (855)307-3893
Website: www.revenue.louisiana.gov
Email: Link through the website's Contact LDR Online tab on the Contact Us page.

MAINE

Individuals domiciled in Maine are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income. Since Jan. 1, 2007, however, there have been "safe harbor" provisions. Under the General Safe Harbor provision, Maine domiciliaries are treated as nonresidents if they satisfy all three of the following conditions: 1) they did not maintain a permanent place of abode in Maine for the entire taxable year; 2) they maintained a permanent place of abode outside Maine for the entire taxable year; and 3) they spent no more than 30 days in the aggregate in Maine during the taxable year. Under the Foreign Safe Harbor provision, Maine domiciliaries are also treated as nonresidents if they are present in a foreign country for 450 days in a 548-day period and do not spend more than 90 days in Maine during that period. Maine's tax rate in 2020 is 5.8 percent on Maine taxable income below $22,000 for singles and $44,450 for joint filers, 6.75 percent up to $52,600 for singles and $105,200 for married filing jointly, and 7.15 percent over those amounts.

Write: Maine Revenue Services, Income Tax Assistance, P.O. Box 9107, Augusta ME 04332-9107.
Phone: (207) 626-8475
Website: www.maine.gov/revenue
Email: income.tax@maine.gov

MARYLAND

Individuals domiciled in Maryland are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Individuals domiciled elsewhere are also considered residents for tax purposes for the portion of any calendar year in which they are physically present in the state for an aggregated total of 183 days or more. Maryland's tax rate is 4.75 percent of taxable income over $3,000 up to $100,000 if filing singly and $150,000 if filing jointly. It then rises in four steps to 5.75 percent of taxable income over $250,000 for singles and over $300,000 for married filers. In addition, Baltimore City and the 23 Maryland counties impose a local income tax, which is a percentage of the Maryland taxable income, using Line 31 of Form 502 or Line 9 of Form 503. The local factor varies from 2.25 percent in Worcester County (and for nonresidents) to 3.2 percent in Baltimore City and County, and in Caroline, Dorchester, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Washington and Wicomico (see website for details for all counties).

Write: Comptroller of Maryland, Revenue Administration Center, Taxpayer Service Section, 110 Carroll Street, Annapolis MD 21411-0001.
Phone: (800) 638-2937 or (410) 260-7980
Website: www.marylandtaxes.com
Email: taxhelp@marylandtaxes.gov

MASSACHUSETTS

Individuals domiciled in Massachusetts are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Salaries and most interest and dividend income are taxed at a flat rate of 5.0 percent for 2020. Some income (e.g., short-term capital gains) remains taxed at 12 percent.

Write: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Services Division, P.O. Box 7010, Boston MA 02204.
Phone: (617) 887-6367
Website: http://www.mass.gov/dor
Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

MICHIGAN

Individuals domiciled in Michigan are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Michigan's tax is 4.25 percent. Some Michigan cities impose an additional 1 or 2 percent income tax. Detroit imposes an additional 2.4 percent income tax.

Write: Michigan Department of Treasury, Lansing MI 48922.
Phone: (517) 636-4486
Website: www.michigan.gov/treasury
Email: treasIndTax@michigan.gov

MINNESOTA

Individuals domiciled in Minnesota are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Minnesota's tax rate is 5.35 percent on taxable income up to $26,960 for singles or $39,410 for married joint filers, rising in three steps to a maximum of 9.85 percent on taxable income over $164,400 for single filers or $273,470 for married filing jointly.

Write: Minnesota Department of Revenue, 600 North Robert St., St. Paul MN 55101.
Phone: (800) 652-9094 or (651) 296-3781
Website: www.revenue.state.mn.us
Email: individual.incometax@state.mn.us

MISSISSIPPI

Individuals domiciled in Mississippi are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Mississippi's tax rate is

3 percent on the first $5,000 of taxable income (first $1,000 exempt), 4 percent on the next $5,000 and 5 percent on taxable income over $10,000 for all taxpayers, whether filing singly or jointly.

Write: Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 1033, Jackson MS 39215-1033.

Phone: (601) 923-7700

Website: www.dor.ms.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

MISSOURI

An individual domiciled in Missouri is considered a nonresident and is not liable for tax on Missouri income if the individual has no permanent residence in Missouri, has a permanent residence elsewhere and is not physically present in the state for more than 30 days during the tax year. Missouri calculates tax on a graduated scale up to $8,424 of taxable income. Any taxable income over $8,424 is taxed at a rate of 5.4 percent.

Write: Individual Income Tax, P.O. Box 2200, Jefferson City MO 65105-2200.

Phone: (573) 751-3505

Website: https://dor.mo.gov/contact

Email: income@dor.mo.gov

MONTANA

Individuals domiciled in Montana are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Montana's tax rate for 2020 rises in six steps from 1 percent of taxable income under $3,100 to a maximum of 6.9 percent of taxable income over $18,400. See the website for various deductions and exemptions.

Write: Montana Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 5805, Helena MT 59604-5805.

Phone: (866) 859-2254 or (406) 444-6900

Website: https://mtrevenue.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

NEBRASKA

Individuals domiciled in Nebraska are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. For 2020 the individual income tax rates range in four steps from a minimum of 2.46 percent to a maximum of 6.84 percent of the excess over $31,750 for singles and $63,500 for joint filers.

Write: Department of Revenue, 301 Centennial Mall South, P.O. Box 94818, Lincoln NE 68509-4818.

Phone: (402) 471-5729

Website: www.revenue.state.ne.us

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

NEVADA

Nevada does not tax personal income. Sales and use tax varies from 6.85 percent to 8.1 percent depending on local jurisdiction. Additional ad valorem personal and real property taxes are also levied.

Write: Nevada Department of Taxation, 1550 College Pkwy, Suite 115, Carson City NV 89706.

Phone: (775) 684-2000

Website: www.tax.state.nv.us

NEW HAMPSHIRE

The state imposes no personal income tax on earned income and no general sales tax. The state does levy, among other taxes, a 5 percent tax on interest and dividend income of more than $2,400 annually for single filers and $4,800 annually for joint filers. For the 2020 and 2021 tax years, a 7.7-percent tax is levied on business profits, including sale of rental property. There is no inheritance tax. Applicable taxes apply to part-year residents.

Write: Taxpayer Services Division, P.O. Box 637, Concord NH 03302-0637.

Phone: (603) 230-5000

Website: www.revenue.nh.gov

NEW JERSEY

A New Jersey domiciliary is considered a nonresident for New Jersey tax purposes if the individual has no permanent residence in New Jersey, has a permanent residence elsewhere and is not physically in the state for more than 30 days during the tax year. Filing a return is not required (unless the nonresident has New Jersey–source income), but it is recommended to preserve domicile status. Filing is required on Form 1040-NR for revenue derived from in-state sources. Tax liability is calculated as a variable lump sum plus a percentage from a minimum of 1.4 percent of taxable gross income up to $20,000, in three steps to 6.37 percent between $75,000 and $500,000, and a maximum of 8.97 percent on taxable gross income over $500,000 for both single and joint filers. There is also a top rate of 10.75 percent for income over $5,000,000.

Write: New Jersey Division of Taxation, Technical Services Branch, P.O. Box 281, Trenton NJ 08695-0281.

Phone: (609) 292-6400

Website: www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

NEW MEXICO

Individuals domiciled in New Mexico are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. The basis for New Mexico's calculation is the Federal Adjusted Gross Income figure. Rates rise in four steps from a minimum of 1.7 percent to a maximum of 4.9 percent on New Mexico taxable income over $16,000 for single filers and $24,000 for married filing jointly.

Write: New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department, 1100 South St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe NM 87504.

Phone: (505) 827-0700

Website: www.tax.newmexico.gov

Email: Link through the website's Email Us tab.

NEW YORK

There is no tax liability for out-of-state income if you have no permanent residence in New York, have a permanent residence elsewhere and are not present in the state more than 30 days during the tax year or you were in a foreign country for at least 450 days during any period of 548 consecutive days; and you, your spouse and minor children spent 90 days or fewer in New York state during this 548-day period. Filing a return is not required, but it is recommended to preserve domicile status. The tax rate for 2020 rises in six steps from a minimum of 4.5 percent to 6.21 percent of taxable income over $21,400 for single filers and $43,000 for married filing jointly; 6.49 percent on taxable income over $80,650 for single filers and $161,550 for joint filers; 6.85 percent on taxable income over $215,400 for single filers or $323,200 for joint filers; and 8.82 percent over $1,077,550 for single filers and over $2,155,350 for joint filers. In New York City, the maximum rate is 3.876 percent over $90,000 for joint filers and over $50,000 for single filers. Filing is required on Form IT-203 for revenue derived from New York sources.

Foreign Service employees assigned to USUN for a normal tour of duty are considered to be resident in New York state for tax purposes. See TSB-M-09(2)I of Jan. 16, 2009, at http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/memos/income/m09_2i.pdf.

Write: New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, Personal Income Tax Information, W.A. Harriman Campus, Albany NY 12227.

Phone: (518) 457-5181

Website: www.tax.ny.gov

Email: Link through the website's Answer Center tab.

NORTH CAROLINA

Individuals domiciled in North Carolina are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. North Carolina's flat tax rate is 5.25 percent for 2019. Residents must also report and pay a "use tax" on purchases made outside the state for use in North Carolina.

Write: North Carolina Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 25000, Raleigh NC 27640-0640.

Phone: (877) 252-3052 or (919) 707-0880

Website: www.dornc.com

NORTH DAKOTA

Individuals domiciled in North Dakota and serving outside the state are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income. Tax rates range in four steps from 1.1 percent on North Dakota taxable income up to $39,450 for singles and $65,900 for joint filers, to a maximum of 2.90 percent on taxable income over $433,200 for single and joint filers.

Write: Office of State Tax Commissioner, State Capitol, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 127, Bismarck ND 58505-0599.

Phone: (701) 328-1247

Website: www.nd.gov/tax

Email: individualtax@nd.gov

OHIO

Individuals domiciled in Ohio are considered residents and their income is subject to tax, using the Federal Adjusted Gross Income figure as a starting base. Ohio's tax rate starts at a minimum of 2.85 percent on taxable income up to $21,750, rising in four steps to a maximum of 4.8 percent on taxable income over $217,400 for single and joint filers. Ohio also charges a school district income tax of between 0.5 and 2 percent, depending on jurisdiction.

Write: Ohio Department of Taxation, Taxpayer Services Center, P.O. Box 530, Columbus OH 43216-0530.

Phone: (800) 282-1780 or (614) 387-0224

Website: www.tax.ohio.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

OKLAHOMA

Individuals domiciled in Oklahoma are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Oklahoma's tax rate rises in five steps to a maximum of 5 percent on taxable income over $7,200 for single filers and $12,200 for married filing jointly.

Write: Oklahoma Tax Commission, Income Tax, P.O. Box 26800, Oklahoma City OK 73126-0800.

Phone: (405) 521-3160

Website: ok.gov/tax

Email: otcmaster@tax.ok.gov

2020 AFSA TAX GUIDE

OREGON

Individuals domiciled in Oregon are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Oregon's tax rate rises from 5 percent on taxable income over $3,550 for single filers and $7,100 for married filing jointly, in three steps to 9.9 percent on taxable income over $125,000 for single filers and $250,000 for joint filers. Oregon has no sales tax.

Write: Oregon Department of Revenue, 955 Center St. NE, Salem OR 97301-2555.

Phone: (800) 356-4222 or (503) 378-4988

Website: www.oregon.gov/dor

Email: questions.dor@oregon.gov

PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania's tax rate is a flat 3.07 percent. Although Pennsylvania tax authorities have ruled that Pennsylvania residents in the U.S. Foreign Service are not on active duty for state tax purposes and thus their income is taxable compensation, AFSA has learned that some FSOs have successfully argued that they qualify as non-residents in Pennsylvania. AFSA recommends that readers who believe they qualify to file as non-residents in Pennsylvania consult a qualified tax adviser to assist with filing their returns. For non–Foreign Service state residents, there is no tax liability for out-of-state income if the individual has no permanent residence in the state, has a permanent residence elsewhere and spends no more than 30 days in the state during the tax year. However, Pennsylvania does not consider government quarters overseas to be a "permanent residence elsewhere." Filing a return is not required, but it is recommended to preserve domicile status. File Form PA-40 for all income derived from Pennsylvania sources.

Write: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Services Department, Harrisburg PA 17128-1061.

Phone: (717) 787-8201

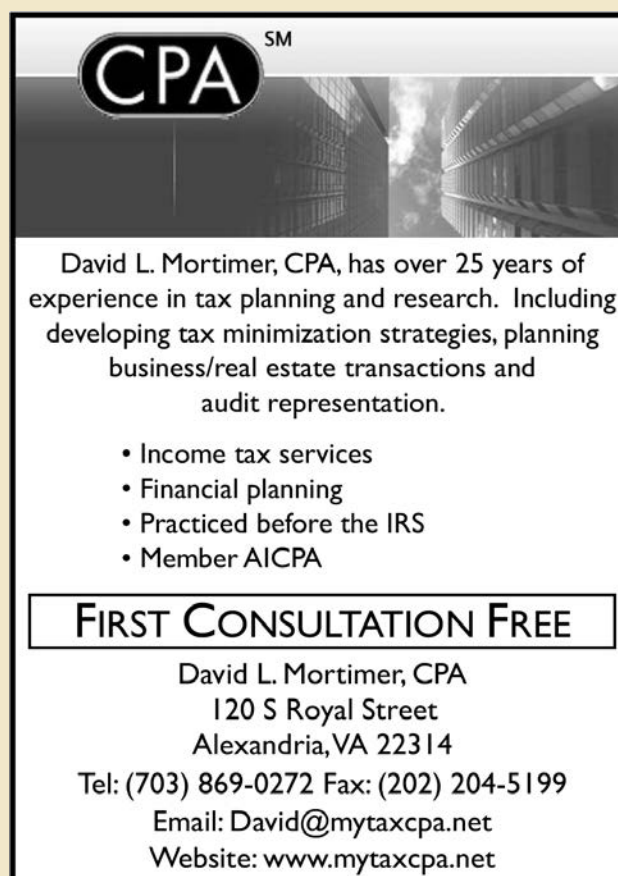
Website: www.revenue.pa.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

PUERTO RICO

Individuals who are domiciled in Puerto Rico are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the Commonwealth. Normally, they may claim a credit with certain limitations for income taxes paid to the United States on any income from sources outside Puerto Rico. Taxes range from 7 percent of taxable income up to $25,000 to 33 percent of the taxable income over $61,500 for all taxpayers.

Write: Departamento de Hacienda, P.O. Box 9024140, San Juan PR 00902-4140.



Phone: (787) 622-0123, Option #8
Website: www.hacienda.gobierno.pr
Email: info@hacienda.gobierno.pr

RHODE ISLAND

Individuals domiciled in Rhode Island are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. The Rhode Island tax rate is 3.75 percent of taxable income up to $65,250 for all filers, 4.75 percent for income over $62,550 and 5.99 percent of taxable income over $148,350 for all filers. Also, a 2010 change treats capital gains as ordinary taxable income. Refer to the tax division's website for current information and handy filing hints, as well as for forms and regulations.

Write: Rhode Island Division of Taxation, Taxpayer Assistance Section, One Capitol Hill, Providence RI 02908-5801.
Phone: (401) 574-8829, Option #3
Website: www.tax.ri.gov
Email: Tax.Assist@tax.ri.gov

SOUTH CAROLINA

Individuals domiciled in South Carolina are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. South Carolina's tax rates rise in six steps to a maximum of 7 percent of South Carolina taxable income over $15,400 for all filers.

Write: South Carolina Tax Commission, P.O. Box 125, Columbia SC 29214.
Phone: (844) 898-8542, Option #1, or (803) 898-5000
Website: www.sctax.org
Email: iitax@dor.sctax.gov, or through the website's Contact Us tab.

SOUTH DAKOTA

There is no state income tax and no state inheritance tax. State sales and use tax is 4.5 percent; municipalities may add up to an additional 2.75 percent.

Write: South Dakota Department of Revenue, 445 East Capitol Ave., Pierre SD 57501-3185.
Phone: (605) 773-3311
Website: dor.sd.gov
Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

TENNESSEE

Salaries and wages are not subject to state income tax, but for 2020, Tennessee imposes a 1-percent tax on most dividends and interest income of more than $1,250 (single filers) or $2,500 (joint filers) in the tax year. Tennessee will be completely free of income taxes in 2021 when the Hall Tax on bond and note interest and stock dividends is repealed altogether.

Write: Tennessee Department of Revenue (Attention: Taxpayer Services), 500 Deaderick St., Nashville TN 37242.
Phone: (615) 253-0600
Website: www.tn.gov/revenue
Email: TN.Revenue@tn.gov

TEXAS

There is no state personal income tax. State sales tax is 6.25 percent with local additions adding up to 2 percent.

Write: Texas Comptroller, P.O. Box 13528, Capitol Station, Austin TX 78711-3528.
Phone: Customer Service Liaison at (888) 334-4112
Website: www.comptroller.texas.gov
Email: Use email options on the Contact Us page of the website.

UTAH

Utah has a flat tax of 4.95 percent on all income. Individuals domiciled in Utah are considered residents and are subject to Utah state tax. Utah requires that all Federal Adjusted Gross Income reported on the federal return be reported on the state return regardless of the taxpayer's physical presence in the state. Some taxpayers will be able to claim either a taxpayer tax credit or a retirement tax credit, or both (see website for explanation).

Write: Utah State Tax Commission, Taxpayer Services Division, 210 North 1950 West, Salt Lake City UT 84134.
Phone: (800) 662-4335, or (801) 297-2200.
Website: www.tax.utah.gov
Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

VERMONT

Individuals domiciled in Vermont are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. The 2019 tax rate ranges from 3.35 percent on taxable income under $39,600 for singles and $66,150 for joint filers, to a maximum of 8.75 percent on taxable income over $200,200 for singles and $243,750 for joint filers.

Write: Vermont Department of Taxes, Taxpayer Services Division, 133 State St., Montpelier VT 05602.
Phone: (802) 828-2865
Website: www.tax.vermont.gov
Email: tax.individualincome@vermont.gov, or through the website's Contact Us tab.

VIRGINIA

Individuals domiciled in Virginia are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of their physical presence in the state. Individuals domiciled elsewhere are also considered residents for tax purposes for the portion of any calendar year in which they are physically present in the state for 183 days or more. These individuals should file using Form 760. In addition, Virginia requires nonresidents to file Form 763 if their Virginia Adjusted Gross Income (which includes any federal salary paid during the time they are residing in Virginia) exceeds $11,950 for single filers and married filing separately, or $23,900 for married filing jointly.

Individual tax rates are: 2 percent if taxable income is less than $3,000; $60 plus 3 percent of excess over $3,000 if taxable income is between $3,000 and $5,000; $120 plus 5 percent of excess over $5,000 if taxable income is between $5,000 and $17,000; and $720 plus 5.75 percent if taxable income is over $17,000. In addition, using Form R-1H, Virginia allows employers of household help to elect to pay state unemployment tax annually instead of quarterly.

Write: Virginia Tax, Office of Customer Services, P.O. Box 1115, Richmond VA 23218-1115.

Phone: (804) 367-8031

Website: www.tax.virginia.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

WASHINGTON

There is no state income tax and no tax on intangibles such as bank accounts, stocks and bonds. Residents may deduct Washington sales tax on their federal tax returns if they itemize deductions. The state tax rate is 7 percent, and local additions can increase that to as much as 20.5 percent in some areas.

Write: Washington State Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Services, P.O. Box 47478, Olympia WA 98504-7478.

Phone: 360-705-6705

Website: www.dor.wa.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab.

WEST VIRGINIA

There is no tax liability for out-of-state income if the individual has no permanent residence in West Virginia, has a permanent residence elsewhere and spends no more than 30 days of the tax year in West Virginia. However, nonresident domiciliaries are required to file a return on Form IT-140 for all income derived from West Virginia sources. Tax rates rise in four steps from 4 percent of taxable income over $10,000 for joint and single filers, to 6.5 percent of taxable income for joint and single filers over $60,000.

Write: Department of Tax and Revenue, The Revenue Center, 1001 Lee St. E., Charleston WV 25337-3784.

Phone: (800) 982-8297 or (304) 558-3333

Website: www.wvtax.gov

Email: taxhelp@wv.gov

WISCONSIN

Individuals domiciled in Wisconsin are considered residents and are subject to tax on their entire income regardless of where the income is earned. Wisconsin's tax rate rises in four steps from 4 percent on income up to $11,970 for single filers or $15,960 for joint filers, to a maximum of 7.65 percent on income over $263,480 for single filers or $351,310 for joint filers.

Write: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Customer Service Bureau, P.O. Box 8949, Madison WI 53708-8949.

Phone: (608) 266-2486

Website: www.revenue.wi.gov

Email: Link through the website's Contact Us tab, or email DORIncome@wisconsin.gov

WYOMING

There is no state income tax and no tax on intangibles such as bank accounts, stocks or bonds. State sales tax is 4 percent. Local jurisdictions may add another 2 percent sales tax and 4 percent for lodging.

Write: Wyoming Department of Revenue, 122 West 25th St., Suite E301, Herschler Building East, Cheyenne WY 82002-0110.

Phone: (307) 777-5200

Website: http://revenue.wyo.gov

Email: dor@wyo.gov

2020 STATE PENSION AND ANNUITY TAX

The laws regarding the taxation of Foreign Service annuities vary greatly from state to state. In addition to those states that have no income tax or no tax on personal income, there are several states that do not tax income derived from pensions and annuities. Idaho taxes Foreign Service annuities while exempting certain categories of Civil Service employees. Several websites provide more detail on individual state taxes for retirees, but one of the more comprehensive is the **Retirement Living Information Center** at www.retirementliving.com/taxes-by-state, which is recommended for further information.

ALABAMA
Social Security and U.S. government pensions are not taxable. The Alabama state sales tax is 4 percent. Depending on the municipality, combined local and state sales tax is as high as 11 percent.

ALASKA
No personal income tax. No state sales or use tax, but most municipalities levy sales and/or use taxes of between 2 and 7 percent and/or a property tax. If over age 65, you may be able to claim an exemption.

ARIZONA
U.S. government pensions are fully taxed, but up to $2,500 may be excluded for each taxpayer. There is also a $2,100 exemption for each taxpayer age 65 or over. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Arizona state sales and use tax is 5.6 percent, with additions depending on the county and/or city.

ARKANSAS
The first $6,000 of income from any retirement plan or IRA is exempt (to a maximum of $6,000 overall). Social Security is excluded from taxable income. There is no estate or inheritance tax. State sales and use tax is 6.5 percent; city and county taxes may add another 5.5 percent.

CALIFORNIA
Pensions and annuities are fully taxable. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. The sales and use tax rate varies from 7.25 percent (the statewide rate) to 11 percent in some areas.

COLORADO
Up to $24,000 of pension or Social Security income can be excluded if an individual is age 65 or over. Up to $20,000 is exempt if age 55 to 64. State sales tax is 2.9 percent; local additions can increase it to as much as 11.2 percent.

CONNECTICUT
Pensions and annuities are fully taxable for residents. Social Security is exempt if Federal Adjusted Gross Income is less than $75,000 for singles or $100,000 for joint filers. Statewide sales tax is 6.35 percent. No local additions.

DELAWARE
Government pension exclusions per person: $2,000 is exempt under age 60; $12,500 if age 60 or over. If over age 65 and you do not itemize, there is an additional standard deduction of $2,500. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Delaware does not impose a sales tax.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Pensions and annuities are fully taxed for residents. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Sales and use tax is 6 percent, with higher rates for some commodities (liquor, meals, etc.).

FLORIDA
There is no personal income, inheritance, gift tax or tax on intangible property. All property is taxable at 100 percent of its just valuation—many exemptions are available. The state sales and use tax is 6 percent. There are additional county sales taxes, which could make the combined rate as high as 9.5 percent.

GEORGIA
Up to $35,000 of retirement income may be excludable for those age 62 or older, or totally disabled. Up to $65,000 of retirement income may be excludable for taxpayers who are 65 or older. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Sales tax is 4 percent statewide, with additions of up to 3 percent depending on jurisdiction.

HAWAII
Pension and annuity distributions from a government pension plan are not taxed in Hawaii. If the employee contributed to the plan, such as a 401(k) with employer matching, only employer contributions are exempt. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Hawaii charges a general excise tax of 4 percent instead of sales tax.

IDAHO
If the individual is age 65 or older, or age 62 and disabled, Civil Service Retirement System and Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System pensions qualify for a deduction. Refer to Form 38 R for details. Federal Employees' Retirement System or Foreign Service Pension System pensions do not qualify for this deduction. The deduction is reduced dollar for dollar by Social Security benefits. Social Security itself is not taxed. Idaho state sales tax is 6 percent; some local jurisdictions add as much as another 3 percent.

ILLINOIS
Illinois does not tax U.S. government pensions, TSP distributions or Social Security. State sales tax is 6.25 percent. Local additions can raise sales tax to 11 percent in some jurisdictions.

INDIANA
Social Security is excluded from taxable income. All other retirement income is taxed at the flat 3.23-percent Indiana income tax rate. Sales tax and use tax is 7 percent.

IOWA
Generally taxable. A married couple with an income for the year of less than $32,000 may file for exemption, if at least one spouse or the head of household is 65 years or older on Dec. 31; single persons who are 65 years or older on Dec. 31 may file for an exemption if their income is $25,000 or less. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Statewide sales tax is 6 percent; local option taxes can add up to another 2 percent.

KANSAS
U.S. government pensions are not taxed. There is an extra deduction of $850 if over age 65. Other pensions are fully taxed along with income from a 401(k) or IRA. Social Security is exempt if Federal Adjusted Gross Income is under $75,000. State sales tax is 6.5 percent, with additions of between 1 and 4 percent depending on jurisdiction.

KENTUCKY
Government pension income is exempt if retired before Jan. 1, 1998. If retired after Dec. 31, 1997, pension/annuity income up to $31,110 remains excludable depending on date of retirement. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Sales and use tax is 6 percent statewide, with no local sales or use taxes.

LOUISIANA
Federal retirement benefits are exempt from state income tax. There is an exemption of $6,000 of other annual retirement income received by any person age 65 or over. Married filing jointly may exclude $12,000. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. State sales tax is 4.5 percent with local additions up to a possible total of 9.45 percent. Use tax is 8 percent regardless of the purchaser's location.

MAINE
Recipients of a government-sponsored pension or annuity who are filing singly may deduct up to $10,000 ($20,000 for married filing jointly) on income that is included in their Federal Adjusted Gross Income, reduced by all Social Security and railroad benefits. For those age 65 and over, there is an additional standard deduction of $1,600 (filing singly) or $2,600 (married filing jointly). General sales tax is now 5.5 percent; 8 percent on meals and liquor.

MARYLAND
Those over 65 or permanently disabled, or who have a spouse who is permanently disabled, may under certain conditions be eligible for Maryland's maximum pension exclusion of $31,100 in tax year 2020. Also, all individuals 65 years or older are entitled to an extra $1,000 personal exemption in addition to the regular $3,200 personal exemption available to all taxpayers. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. See the worksheet and instructions in the Maryland Resident Tax Booklet. General sales tax is 6 percent; 9 percent on liquor.

MASSACHUSETTS
Federal pensions and Social Security are excluded from Massachusetts gross income. Each taxpayer over age 65 is allowed an additional $700 exemption on other income. Sales tax is 6.25 percent.

MICHIGAN
Federal, and state/local government pensions may be partially exempt, based on the year you were born and the source of the pension.
(a) If born before 1946, private pension or IRA benefits included in AGI are partially exempt; public pensions are exempt.
(b) If born after 1946 and before 1952, the exemption for public and private pensions is limited to $20,000 for singles and $40,000 for married filers.
(c) If born after 1952, not eligible for any exemption until reaching age 67.

Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Full details at: https://bit.ly/michigan-retirement-guidance.

Michigan's state sales tax rate is 6 percent. There are no city, local or county sales taxes.

MINNESOTA
Social Security income is taxed by Minnesota to the same extent it is on your federal return. If your only income is Social Security, you would not be required to file an income tax return. All federal pensions are taxable, but single taxpayers who are over 65 or disabled may exclude some income if Federal Adjusted Gross Income is under $33,700 and nontaxable Social Security is under $9,600. For a couple who are both over 65, the limits are $42,000 for Adjusted Gross Income and $12,000 for nontaxable Social Security. Statewide sales and use tax is 6.875 percent. A few cities and counties also add a sales tax, which can be as high as 8.375 percent.

MISSISSIPPI
Social Security, qualified retirement income from federal, state and private retirement systems, and income from IRAs are exempt from Mississippi tax. There is an additional exemption of $1,500 on other income if over age 65. Statewide sales tax is 7 percent.

MISSOURI
Up to 65 percent of public pension income may be deducted if Missouri Adjusted Gross Income is less than $100,000 when married filing jointly or $85,000 for single filers, up to a limit of $36,976 for each spouse. The maximum private pension deduction is $6,000. You may also deduct 100 percent of Social Security income if over age 62 and Federal Adjusted Gross Income is less than the limits above. Sales tax is 4.225 percent; local sales and use tax additions may raise the total to 10.1 percent.

MONTANA
Montana taxes all pension and retirement income received while residing in Montana. Those over 65 can exempt an additional $800 of interest income for single taxpayers and $1,600 for married joint filers. For taxpayers with an AGI income under $25,000 (single filers) or $32,000 (joint filers), all Social Security retirement income is deductible. For taxpayers above those limits but below $34,000 (single filers) or $44,000 (joint filers), half of Social Security retirement income is deductible. Above those second-level limits, 15 percent is deductible. Montana has no general sales tax, but tax is levied on the sale of various commodities.

NEBRASKA
U.S. government pensions and annuities are fully taxable. Social Security is taxable. State sales tax is 5.5 percent; local taxes can drive that rate as high as 8 percent.

NEVADA
No personal income tax. Sales and use tax varies from 6.85 to 8.1 percent, depending on local jurisdiction.

NEW HAMPSHIRE
No personal income tax. There is no inheritance tax. There is a 5 percent tax on interest/dividend income over $2,400 for singles ($4,800 married filing jointly). A $1,200 exemption is available for those 65 or over. No general sales tax. Several services (prepared food, hotel rooms, etc.) are taxed at 9 percent.

NEW JERSEY
Pensions and annuities from civilian government service are subject to state income tax, with exemptions for those age 62 or older, or totally and permanently disabled. See this link, however, for the distinction between the "Three-year method" and the "General Rule method" for contributory pension plans: http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/njit6.shtml. For 2020, qualifying singles and heads of households may be able to exclude up to $75,000 of retirement income; those married filing jointly up to $100,000; those married filing separately up to $50,000 each. These exclusions are eliminated for New Jersey gross incomes over $100,000. Residents over 65 may be eligible for an additional $1,000 personal exemption. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. State sales tax is 6.625 percent.

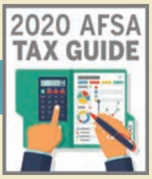
NEW MEXICO
All pensions and annuities are taxed as part of Federal Adjusted Gross Income. Taxpayers 65 and older may exempt up to $8,000 (single) or $16,000 (joint) from any income source if their income is under $28,500 (individual filers) or $51,000 (married filing jointly). The exemption is reduced as income increases, disappearing altogether at $51,000. State tax rate is 5.125 percent. Local taxes combined with state sales tax can be as high as just over 9 percent.

NEW YORK
Social Security, U.S. government pensions and annuities are not taxed. For those over age 59 and a half, up to $20,000 of other annuity income (e.g., Thrift Savings Plan) may be excluded. See N.Y. Tax Publication 36 at https://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/publications/income/pub36.pdf for details. Sales tax is 4 percent statewide. Other local taxes may add up to an additional 4.875 percent.

NORTH CAROLINA
Pursuant to the "Bailey" decision (see http://dornc.com/taxes/individual/benefits.html), government retirement benefits received by federal retirees who had five years of creditable service in a federal retirement system on Aug. 12, 1989, are exempt from North Carolina income tax. Those who do not have five years of creditable service on Aug. 12, 1989, must pay North Carolina tax on their federal annuities. For those over 65, an extra $750 (single) or $1,200 (couple) may be deducted. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. State sales tax is 4.75 percent; local taxes may increase this by up to 2.75 percent.

NORTH DAKOTA
All pensions and annuities are taxed. Taxpayers can exclude $5,000 of pension income from Civil Service, and some other qualified, plans. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. General sales tax is 5 percent; local jurisdictions impose up to 3.5 percent more.

OHIO
Retirement income is taxed. Taxpayers age 65 and over may take a $50 credit per return. In addition, Ohio gives a tax credit based on the amount of the retirement income included in Ohio Adjusted Gross Income, reaching a maximum of $200 for any retirement income over $8,000. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. State sales tax is 5.75 percent. Counties and regional transit authorities may add to this, but the total must not exceed 8.75 percent.



OKLAHOMA
Individuals receiving FERS/FSPS or private pensions may exempt up to $10,000, but not to exceed the amount included in the Federal Adjusted Gross Income. A hundred percent of a federal pension paid in lieu of Social Security (i.e., CSRS and FSRDS—"old system"—including the CSRS/FSRDS portion of an annuity paid under both systems) is exempt. Social Security included in FAGI is exempt. State sales tax is 4.5 percent. County and local tax rates vary for a total sales tax of up to 11 percent. The average Oklahoma sales tax is around 9 percent.

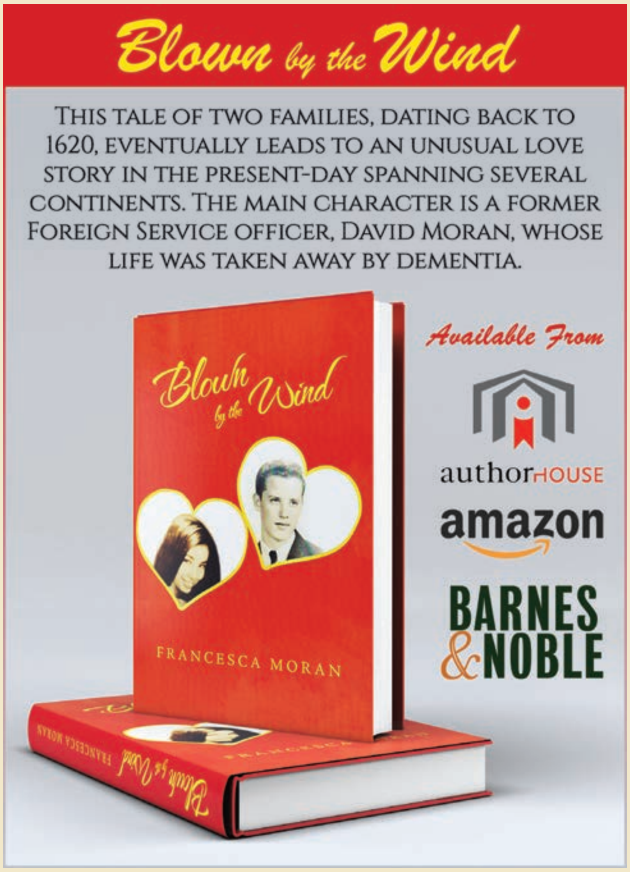
OREGON
Generally, all retirement income is subject to Oregon tax when received by an Oregon resident. However, federal retirees who retired on or before Oct. 1, 1991, may exempt their entire federal pension; those who worked both before and after Oct. 1, 1991, must prorate their exemption using the instructions in the tax booklet. If you are over age 62, a tax credit of up to 9 percent of taxable pension income is available to recipients of pension income, including most private pension income, whose household income was less than $22,500 (single) and $45,000 (joint), and who received less than $7,500 (single)/$15,000 (joint) in Social Security benefits. The credit is the lesser of the tax liability, or 9 percent of taxable pension income. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Oregon has no sales tax.

PENNSYLVANIA
Government pensions and Social Security are not subject to personal income tax. Pennsylvania sales tax is 6 percent. Other taxing entities may add up to 2 percent.

PUERTO RICO
The first $11,000 of income received from a federal pension can be excluded for individuals under 60. For those over 60, the exclusion is $15,000. If the individual receives more than one federal pension, the exclusion applies to each pension or annuity separately. Social Security is excluded from taxable income.

RHODE ISLAND
U.S. government pensions and annuities are fully taxable. Social Security is taxed to the extent it is federally taxed. Seniors with a Federal Adjusted Gross Income over $104,450 pay tax on Social Security benefits. Higher-income seniors are not eligible for the Rhode Island income tax exemption on private, government or military retirement plan payouts. Out-of-state government pensions are fully taxed. Sales tax is 7 percent; meals and beverages are 8 percent.

SOUTH CAROLINA
Individuals under age 65 can claim a $3,000 deduction on qualified retirement



income; those age 65 or over may claim a $15,000 deduction on qualified retirement income ($30,000 if both spouses are over 65), but must reduce this figure by any other retirement deduction claimed. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Sales tax is 6 percent plus up to 3 percent in some counties. Residents age 85 and over pay 5 percent.

SOUTH DAKOTA
No personal income tax or inheritance tax. State sales and use tax is 4.5 percent; municipalities may add up to an additional 2.75 percent. Residents age 66 and older and have an annual income under $12,670 (single) or total household income under $17,200 are eligible for a sales tax refund.

TENNESSEE
Social Security, pension income and income from IRAs and TSP are not subject to personal income tax. In 2020 most interest and dividend income is taxed at 1 percent if over $1,250 (single filers) or $2,500 (married filing jointly). However, for tax year 2015 and subsequently, those over 65 with total income from all sources of less than $37,000 for a single filer and $68,000 for joint filers are completely exempt from all taxes on income. State sales tax is 5 percent on food; 7 percent on other goods, with between 1.5 and 2.75 percent added, depending on jurisdiction.

TEXAS
No personal income tax or inheritance tax. State sales tax is 6.25 percent. Local options can raise the rate to 8.25 percent.

UTAH
Utah has a flat tax rate of 4.95 percent of all income. For taxpayers over 65, there is a retirement tax credit of $450 for single filers and $900 for joint filers. Qualifying modified adjusted gross income levels are under $43,000 for single residents and less than $50,000 for joint filers. Married taxpayers who file separate returns are eligible with a modified AGI under $34,000. See the state website for details. State sales tax ranges from 5.95 percent to 8.60 percent, depending on local jurisdiction.

VERMONT
U.S. government pensions and annuities are fully taxable. Social Security benefits are taxed for single filer income greater than $45,000 annually or over $60,000 for joint filers. Out-of-state government pensions and other retirement income are taxed at rates from 3.35 percent to 8.75 percent. State general sales tax is 6 percent; local option taxes may raise the total to 7 percent (higher on some commodities).

VIRGINIA
Individuals over age 65 can take a $12,000 deduction. The maximum $12,000 deduction is reduced by one dollar for each dollar by which Adjusted Gross Income exceeds $50,000 for single, and $75,000 for married, taxpayers. All taxpayers over 65 receive an additional personal exemption of $800. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. The estate tax was repealed for all deaths after July 1, 2007. The general sales tax rate is 5.3 percent (4.3 percent state tax and 1 percent local tax, with an extra 0.7 percent in Northern Virginia).

WASHINGTON
No personal income tax. Retirement income is not taxed. State sales tax is 7 percent; rates are updated quarterly. Local taxes may increase the total to as much as 20.5 percent.

WEST VIRGINIA
$2,000 of any civil or state pension is exempt. West Virginia taxes Social Security benefits to the extent they are taxed at the federal level. However, this tax is being phased out over three years. In 2020, 35 percent of Social Security benefits will be exempt. In 2021 the exemption will rise to 65 percent, then the tax will be eliminated by 2022. Taxpayers 65 and older or surviving spouses of any age may exclude the first $8,000 (individual filers) or $16,000 (married filing jointly) of any retirement income. Out-of-state government pensions qualify for this exemption. State sales tax is 6 percent, with additions of between 0.5 and 1 percent in some jurisdictions.

WISCONSIN
Pensions and annuities are fully taxable. Social Security is excluded from taxable income. Those age 65 or over may take two personal deductions totaling $950. Benefits received from a federal retirement system account established before Dec. 31, 1963, are not taxable. Those over 65 and with a FAGI of less than $15,000 (single filers) or $30,000 (joint filers) may exclude $5,000 of income from federal retirement systems or IRAs. Those over 65 may take an additional personal deduction of $250. State sales tax is 5 percent; local taxes may raise this rate up to 5.6 percent.

WYOMING
No personal income tax. State sales tax is 4 percent. Local taxes may add up to 2 percent on sales and 4 percent on lodging.

Diego Cortes Asencio, 89, a retired FSO and former ambassador, died on Oct. 6, 2020, at his home in Palm Beach, Fla., due to complications from myasthenia gravis. With him was his wife of 67 years, Nancy, and their children.

Born in 1931 in Nijar, Spain, Mr. Asencio derived his American citizenship from his naturalized father, who had returned to his hometown to marry. He was raised in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark, N.J.

Mr. Asencio graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington, D.C., in 1952 and was a member of the Delta Phi Epsilon Foreign Service Fraternity.

After military service as a sergeant in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, he joined the Foreign Service in 1957. His first assignment was in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington, and his second was a posting to Mexico to fill in for consular officers in Spanish-language training. In 1964 he was transferred to Panama, where he participated in the Panama Canal negotiations.

Subsequent assignments included serving as special assistant to the assistant secretary for Inter-American Affairs/coordinator of the Alliance for Progress, deputy chief of mission in Portugal just before the Revolution of the Carnations, political counselor in Brazil during a military government and deputy chief of mission in Venezuela during the nationalization of the petroleum industry.

In 1977 President Jimmy Carter appointed Mr. Asencio U.S. ambassador to Colombia, where he implemented a Drug Enforcement Administration program aimed at eradicating drug trafficking.

In 1980, while attending a cocktail party at the embassy of the Dominican Republic in Bogotá, he was captured by the radical paramilitary organization known as M-19 and held hostage with a group of other foreign ambassadors.

In a departure from the usual turn of events, the hostages directly participated in the negotiations that eventually set them free, as Amb. Asencio recounts in his book *Diplomats and Terrorists, Or: How I Survived a 61-Day Cocktail Party* (2011). Amb. Asencio was ultimately awarded the State Department's highest commendation, the Award for Valor gold medal.

After completing an assignment as assistant secretary of State for consular affairs, he was named ambassador to Brazil in 1983, and served there until 1986, when he retired.

The Asencios' memoir, *The Joys and Perils of Serving Abroad* (2014), recounts Amb. Asencio's membership in the U.S.-Moscow Investigating Commission and his work as chair of the Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development.

In 1991 Amb. Asencio and his wife moved to Palm Beach, Fla., where Governor Lawton Chiles promptly appointed him executive director of the Florida International Affairs Commission with a charge to coordinate the state's foreign trade policy.

Later, he engaged in consulting with American firms, including McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Casals & Associates, on their Latin American operations.

Amb. Asencio is survived by his wife, Nancy Rodriguez Asencio; sons Manuel Asencio, Diego Carlos Asencio and Francis Xavier Asencio; daughter Maria Dolores Asencio; grandchildren Joshua Asencio, Alexandra Victoria Asencio, Max Victor Asencio, Jessica Drew Hippolyte-Blackman, Alicia Christina Montgomery, Andrew John Cooke, Benjamin Joseph Cooke and Nicholas Scott Asencio; and great-grandchildren Lily Anne Montgomery and Charles Arthur Asencio. He was predeceased by a second daughter, Anne Frances Asencio.

Lois Mervyn, 90, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, died on Oct. 20, 2020, of a heart attack.

Born in Great Falls, Mont., Ms. Mervyn and her family later moved to Moscow, Idaho, where she attended college at the University of Idaho. After graduating, she married, moved to a farm and had three children.

She later obtained a Ph.D. in English and taught at the University of Arizona and Colorado State University.

In her mid-40s, she took the Foreign Service exam on a whim to see how she would do. To her surprise, she scored well and was offered a position as the cultural affairs officer in Madrid.

Ms. Mervyn's assignments included tours in England, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Pakistan.

On retirement she moved to Tucson, Ariz., where she became a docent at the Historical Society and traveled with Pathfinders Tours.

She is survived by two children, a sister, and three grandchildren.

Ernest Nagy, 90, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, died on Nov. 25, 2017, in Toluca Lake, Calif.

Mr. Nagy was born on May 1, 1927, in Hamilton Square, N.J. Both of his parents were born in Hungary and immigrated separately to the United States around 1920. They met and were married in Chicago. His father was a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

When Mr. Nagy was 6, his family was transferred to New Jersey. He graduated from Plainfield Academy before being drafted into the Army. After spending his service stateside, he enrolled at the University of New Mexico.

After college he worked for a time as a salesman for a plate glass company in Toledo. But when he heard that the State Department was looking for people who could speak Hungarian, he decided to travel to Washington, D.C., for an interview.

Mr. Nagy was hired and assigned to Budapest, where he met his wife, Helen. She had joined the Foreign Service as a secretary in 1951. The couple married in Budapest and had a son, David, before being transferred to the United States a month before the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

In 1960 Mr. Nagy was posted to Berlin, where Berliners ecstatically welcomed President John F. Kennedy in 1963. At his first stop at the Kongresshalle, President Kennedy saw a quote from Benjamin Franklin in German and asked what it meant. Mr. Nagy gave a quick translation.

Intrigued, the president asked him to write it down, which Mr. Nagy did on the back of an envelope. While a host of speakers held forth, he watched the president studying the envelope and making edits to the cards that held notes for his later speech at the Rathaus. Kennedy ended up discarding his prepared speech and extemporaneously riffed on the quote: The result was his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech.

Mr. Nagy served for 34 years, with tours in Copenhagen, Rome, Heidelberg and London. He was also a diplomat-in-residence at the University of Arkansas.

In retirement, Ernst and Helen Nagy settled in Washington, D.C. Once a year, they always took at least one big road trip in the United States, because home leave habits die hard, and one overseas trip.

Mrs. Nagy took on contract jobs for interesting assignments, such as working on the advance team for presidential visits to Kiev and Vancouver.

In 1999, an accident left Mr. Nagy a quadriplegic. He underwent several years of arduous rehabilitation, regaining the use of his upper limbs, though with much less strength and control. In time, he was able to walk again with a walker. The couple relocated to California to be near their son in 2011.

In 2016 the Hungarian government invited Mr. Nagy to fly to Budapest for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. His son, David, accompanied him. In many ways, it was a full circling back to the real beginning of Mr. Nagy's adult life.

Shortly after Thanksgiving 2017, Mr. Nagy died in his sleep. Friends remember him as an extraordinarily smart, witty and kind man. Despite the cruel bad luck of his spinal cord injury, friends never heard him complain or feel sorry for himself.

Mr. Nagy was predeceased by his wife, Helen, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. He is survived by his son, David.

■ **Edward J. Perkins**, 92, a retired member of the Senior Foreign Service and former ambassador with the rank of Career Minister, died on Nov. 7, 2020. He received AFSA's 2020 Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy (see his interview in the December *FSJ*).

Mr. Perkins was born in Sterlington, La., on June 8, 1928, and grew up there and in Pine Bluff, Ark., and Portland, Ore. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in 1968, and master's (1972) and Ph.D. (1978) degrees in public administration from the University of Southern California.

After serving for three years in the U.S. Army and four years in the U.S. Marine Corps, he joined the Foreign Service in 1972. In addition to several domestic postings, his early assignments included Ghana and Liberia, where he served as deputy chief of mission.

In 1985 he was appointed U.S. ambassador to Liberia, and in 1986 he was named ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, where he served for three years during the final days of apartheid.

Appointed Director General of the Foreign Service in 1989, he made diversity a priority. In 1992 he was appointed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and U.S. Representative on the U.N. Security Council. In 1993 he was named U.S. ambassador to Australia, where he served until his retirement in 1996.

On retiring, he was appointed the William J. Crowe Chair and executive director of the International Programs Center at the University of Oklahoma, serving from 1996 until 2010. While there, he wrote his memoir, *Mr. Ambassador: Warrior for Peace* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

Ambassador Perkins received many awards during his Foreign Service career, and his affiliations were numerous, including being an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. But among the most important were the Thursday Luncheon Group, of which he was a founding member, and the Association of Black American Ambassadors, where he served as president at the time of his death.

His commitment to the recruitment, retention and advancement of historically underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service and State Department led to the establishment of the Pickering and Rangel Fellowship programs.

Colleagues and friends remember Amb. Perkins as a passionate champion of diplomacy and a leader who throughout his career advocated a more diverse State Department and Foreign Service as both a moral and a strategic imperative.

Once asked how he wished to be

remembered, Amb. Perkins had a simple reply: "As a good citizen of the world."

Amb. Perkins was predeceased by his wife, the former Lucy Ching-mei Liu, in 2009. He is survived by two daughters, Katherine and Sarah, their husbands, four grandchildren and extended family worldwide.

Robert A. Powers, 88, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, died on June 8, 2020, in Springfield, Va.

Born and raised outside Boston, Mr. Powers was the youngest of six children in an Irish Catholic family. After graduating from high school in Arlington, Mass., he enlisted in the Air Force and served in the Korean War.

On return from military service, he attended the Berklee School of Music and sang professionally for a time. Music remained an important part of his life.

In 1959 he joined the United States Information Agency and was stationed in Manila. There he married Betty Rae Zellmer, and there his two sons were born.

Mr. Powers' next posting was in Beirut, where he helped run the evacuation of Americans during the Six-Day War in 1967. His next assignment was in Buon Ma Thuot, Vietnam.

After returning to Washington, Mr. Powers was sent to Guadalajara, where he ran the U.S. Binational Center. This was followed by postings in Santiago and in Panama, where he served as public affairs officer.

He then took a two-year leave of absence to help run the Multinational Force and Observers, first in Tel Aviv and then as deputy director in Rome. After returning to USIA, he ran the Regional Program Office in Vienna.

Mr. Powers was the director of USIA's Press and Publications Service when he retired in 1995.

After retiring, Mr. Powers and his wife settled in Springfield, Va. The couple loved to travel, and Mr. Powers stayed busy serving on several boards and writing about his life.

Mr. Powers was predeceased by his wife of 58 years, Betty Rae, in 2019.

He leaves his two sons, Patrick and Michael, and three grandchildren.

David Rawson, 79, a retired FSO and former ambassador, died unexpectedly on Sept. 16, 2020, at the Friendsview Retirement Community in Newberg, Ore.

Mr. Rawson was born in Addison, Mich., on Sept. 10, 1941. The son of a medical missionary, he moved with his family when he was 6 years old to Bujumbura, Burundi. There for eight years, he developed fluency in Kirundi and a familiarity with the Hutu-Tutsi culture.

After four years of secondary school in Kenya, Mr. Rawson returned home to college at Malone University in Canton, Ohio, majoring in history. He then earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in international studies at American University in Washington, D.C.

During the summer of 1966, Mr. Rawson did postdoctoral research in Rwanda and Burundi. On completion of his studies, he returned to Malone University to teach. Three years later, in 1971, he joined the Foreign Service.

His diplomatic career was entirely concentrated on sub-Saharan Africa, both in the field and in Washington, D.C. His assignments began in Kigali, and alternated between West Africa (Mali twice and Senegal) and East Africa (Rwanda twice and Somalia), with a single tour in Madagascar.

Mr. Rawson's assignments in Washington included a tour as director of the Office of West African Affairs (1989-1991). There he reported to Amb. Herman J. Cohen, then assistant secretary of State for African affairs, under whom he had served earlier in Senegal and who would assign him to return to East Africa to deal with the trouble brewing there.

Mr. Rawson's Africa postings were personally eventful. During his first assignment to Mali, his first wife, Viola Mosher, the mother of his two children, was killed in a tragic road accident. He later married Sandra Miller, whom he met in Senegal.

On his initial assignment to Rwanda, Mr. Rawson assisted with the massive refugee flows, the result of the first Burundian genocide in 1972. During his second posting starting in 1993, as ambassador, he led the evacuation of all Americans present in country at the outbreak of the genocide in 1994.

Following his retirement in 1999, Amb. Rawson returned to university teaching and writing. He taught international affairs and related subjects for 18 years at Spring Arbor and Hillsdale Universities in Michigan.

In 2018 he moved to Newberg, Ore., where he taught at George Fox University for two final years. Throughout his diplomatic and academic careers, he focused on the practice of diplomacy within the broad field of conflict resolution.

In 2018, Amb. Rawson published *Prelude to Genocide: Arusha, Rwanda, and the Failure of Diplomacy*. He donated all the materials he had drawn on to the George Fox University, where they will be permanently available to the public.

Amb. Rawson was predeceased by his first wife, Viola Mosher, in 1977.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Sandra, of Newberg, Ore.; his daughter and son-in-law, Christina and Georg Mathiak, and two granddaughters, Corrie and Ann-Marie, of Berlin, Germany; and his son and daughter-in-law, Jonathan and Lori Rawson of Portland, Ore.

Life After Foggy Bottom

Hell and Other Destinations: A 21st-Century Memoir
Madeleine Albright, Harper, 2020, $29.99/hardcover, e-book available, 384 pages.

Review by Joseph L. Novak

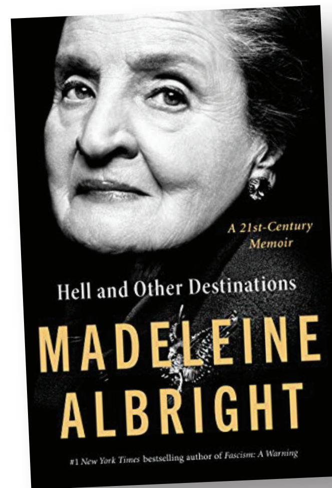
In her vibrant new memoir, *Hell and Other Destinations*, Madeleine Albright offers an inside account of how she has reconstructed her life and career after serving as the 64th Secretary of State (1997-2001).

Albright begins the book in an introspective manner. She relates that she loved serving as Secretary and was sorry to depart the State Department on Jan. 20, 2001, when she turned the position over to Colin Powell.

With no plans to retire, she had to prepare herself for the challenge of finding a new role post–Foggy Bottom. The straightforward question she put to herself at the time was, What is there for a former Secretary of State to do?

To America's benefit, she quickly found a new role as a distinguished stateswoman. As detailed in the book, she has kept busy with a constellation of worthy projects. She gives speeches worldwide. She is a professor at Georgetown University and the chair of the National Democratic Institute. She runs her own consulting firm, the Albright Stonebridge Group.

She has even found time to write no fewer than seven books. These include the tome-like *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (2003) and the visual treat *Read My Pins: Stories from a Diplomat's Jewel Box* (2009). She is also an active member of the Aspen Ministers Forum, a group of former foreign ministers that periodically issues policy statements. Albright adds that the group is informally and fondly known as "Madeleine and Her Exes."



While reviewing her impressive work schedule, Albright also uses the book to explore some serious issues. She is on target in worrying about the recrudescence of right-wing populism, a subject she wrote about in depth in her book *Fascism: A Warning* (2018).

In a chapter evocatively titled "Unhinged," she laments deepening divisions in Western societies over globalization and immigration, commenting: "The lessons learned during World War II about the benefits of multilateral cooperation and the dangers of unbridled jingoism are no longer fresh."

Further, she expresses concern about President Vladimir Putin and "the renewed growling of the Russian bear." Albright is a convinced Atlanticist who advocates strong support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, stating: "If NATO is taken for granted, or if its members drift further apart, the alliance will surely go in precisely the direction that Putin hopes."

Albright also discusses the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) concept. She underscores that the international community must take coordinated action and should even envisage intervening militarily on the basis of R2P to stop grave human rights violations. She is certainly correct to highlight R2P, which is an important addition to the international human rights law lexicon.

She could have spent more time, however, delving into whether the American people will ever come to accept R2P as a core rationale for possible future U.S. military action. It does not bode well that the public's support for military action abroad has eroded due to long-running conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the cascading chaos in Libya in the aftermath of the U.S.-led intervention there.

A gifted raconteur, Albright makes sure to introduce anecdotes so the text does not get bogged down. She recounts how, without a Diplomatic Security Service detail post-2001, she suddenly had to acclimate to shopping and walking down the street solo.

She describes a lighthearted Twitter brawl with comedian Conan O'Brien and admits to having a crush on actor and director Robert Redford. She guest stars in television shows, including

To America's benefit, Albright quickly found a new role as a distinguished stateswoman. As detailed in the book, she has kept busy with a constellation of worthy projects.

"Madam Secretary," "Parks and Recreation" and "Gilmore Girls." There is even discussion of a gig on "Dancing with the Stars."

And there are more. In one hilarious interlude, she was bizarrely mistaken for Mother Teresa by two inebriated men, one of whom even asked her to "bless" him. In another vignette, she recounts receiving an eerie voicemail from a *New York Times* reporter. He said he was drafting her "advance obituary" and needed some additional information.

A criticism of the book is that keeping up with the former Secretary's productivity and numerous pursuits can make an observer feel, well, dazed. Touching on this point, former Czech president Vaclav Havel is reported to have been stunned that Albright had written yet another book given all the constraints on her time. A reader of her latest book certainly has the license to feel as Havel did.

That said, the overall impact of *Hell and Other Destinations* is highly positive. Demonstrating remarkable vitality, Albright has performed many public services during her post–Foggy Bottom years. Now at age 83, she shows no sign of slowing down.

Like William Finnegan in his brilliant Pulitzer Prize–winning memoir, *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life*, Madeleine Albright knows she has caught a good wave that she doesn't want to end. ■

Joseph L. Novak is a Foreign Service officer serving in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

It's Not About Leveling the Playing Field

Striking Back: Overt and Covert Options to Combat Russian Disinformation
Thomas Kent, Jamestown Foundation, 2020, $24.95/paperback, 300 pages.

Reviewed by Mike Hurley

It was the 1980s in Moscow when Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party, tried to change the course of the country via "glasnost," a greater openness about Soviet realities.

I had just arrived at Embassy Moscow's press office and was assigned to get an arms control article by Max Kampelman, the U.S. chief for arms control negotiations with the Soviets, published in *Izvestiya*, the government newspaper of record. *Izvestiya* resisted at first—they had never published an article by a U.S. official explaining a U.S. policy—but eventually published it on Aug. 26, 1987. Were we "leveling the playing field"?

In a word, no. Fast forward to now. The news is dominated by allegations about Russian interference in U.S. elections, and there was no national plan to stop it for 2020. We are therefore fortunate to have *Striking Back*, a new book by Thomas Kent, former president and CEO of RFE/RL (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty—a U.S. government–funded broadcaster that reports news in 23 countries without a free or fully developed press, including Russia). Talk about timely!

Mr. Kent has crafted nothing short of an action plan for government and nongovernment players to take down what he calls "Russian Information Operations." The goal is to put the Russian

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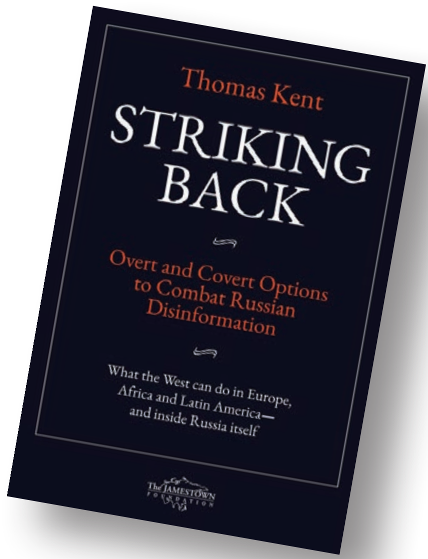
state on notice that interference in our elections is not acceptable. The book lays out in crystal-clear fashion several measures that must be implemented or enhanced. With a plan that is lucid and accessible to the nonspecialist, *Striking Back* is needed now because our foundational institutions are under attack.

The Russians are already implementing their own plan of attack, known as the Gerasimov Doctrine, named after the chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia. Under this



Stepping up the fight against disinformation helps Russia to understand what we find unacceptable, and when that is clear we will be better able to find common interests on the big issues.

policy, the Russians have found an inexpensive tool to use social media to create "permanent unrest and conflict within an enemy state" (Molly McKew, September/October 2017 *Politico*). They use the tensions over race and other culture wars against U.S. citizens by isolating target audiences, which can result in warring factions.

And Kent is on the case. As governments are slow (here he includes the European Union as well as the U.S. government) to react to ultrafast social media developments, his favored vehicle for combating Russian disinformation is nongovernment actors (NGAs).

He makes it clear in his call for action that organizations outside government, if they work together, can "kill the messenger" by taking on outfits such as the (Russian military intelligence–supported) Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg. NGAs can unmask Russian trolls, he states, "so that everything that source produces in the future will be met with skepticism."

As the U.S. government continues its piecemeal approach to fighting Russian disinformation campaigns via the Department of Defense, USAID, State's Global Engagement Center and others, Kent sees an important funding role for the U.S. government, but he advocates larger grants and fewer bureaucratic requirements and agendas attached.

Funding of NGAs is problematic in Russia given the strict 2012 "foreign agent law" (and subsequent amendments) that requires Russian nonprofits to register as foreign agents and be subjected to a death grip of bureaucratic attention to hamper their activities. Kent suggests that Russian frontline fighters cooperate with international news organizations, undergo IT training and be awarded prizes.

Yet the big brother problem remains. When it comes to Russian disinformation, the playing field has never been level. I have worked with some who think that if we just "make nice," the Russians will, too. But that approach is to abandon the field. Just ask anti-disinformation practitioners in the three Baltic countries.

As one who lived in the Soviet Union and Russia for 13 years between 1972 and 2012, I would like to see more hard evidence of what Russian information operations actually do. Without revealing sources and methods, can the public know how we see the Russian fingerprints, and what is the resulting damage?

The author does not advocate a radical transformation in our attitude toward Russia. Stepping up the fight against disinformation helps Russia to understand what we find unacceptable, and when that is clear we will be better able to find common interests on the big issues such as arms control, the environment and human trafficking.

Times of "playing only defense" are in the past. *Striking Back* is a masterful game plan for acting now to combat Russian disinformation. ■

Mike Hurley started with the U.S. Information Agency in 1985 and retired from the State Department in 2015. Between 1972 and 2012, he lived for 13 years in the Soviet Union and Russia. In 2011 he created U.S. Embassy Moscow's "American Seasons in Russia," a yearlong celebration of the depth and diversity of U.S. culture, by raising $2 million in the private sector in Russia. It featured the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Riccardo Muti, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Herbie Hancock and dozens of other performing groups from zydeco to gospel.

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A Crown and a Nation

BY BEATRICE CAMP

History matters. Finding ways to deploy common historical memories to strengthen relationships is good diplomacy. When I was the cultural affairs officer in Budapest, a Hungarian professor approached me about the upcoming 20th anniversary of the United States returning the Holy Crown of St. Stephen to Hungary in 1978. This anniversary was not on the embassy radar, making my proposal to stage a commemoration a tough sell.

It turned out to be a perfect opportunity, however, to connect Hungary's prospective NATO membership with the "return to Western Europe" theme initiated by President Jimmy Carter's decision to return the crown two decades earlier.

A vital symbol of Hungarian statehood, the thousand-year-old crown was put into American hands after World War II by Hungarians who didn't want it to fall to the Soviets. It was secured in Fort Knox, Kentucky, where the State Department's Hungarian desk officer visited it once a year.

The crown's 1978 return initiated the process of drawing Hungary back into the West.

The Hungarian American community, many of whom were refugees from the 1956 uprising, had opposed returning the crown as long as the country was under communist rule. The Carter administration came up with a formulation under which the crown was returned to the people of Hungary, not the government. We made sure it was received by all the religious leaders, including the chief rabbi, and placed in the Hungarian National Museum, not the parliament.

As I learned from old news clippings a local employee had saved for two decades (despite regular admonitions to clean out the files, bless her heart), the U.S. delegation that brought the crown to Budapest was led by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

It included Representative Lee Hamilton and Nobel Prize recipient and biochemist Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi. They arrived the day before the ceremony to turn over the crown; reportedly, some members of the delegation guarded the relic by sitting up all night playing poker.

Twenty years later, NATO enlargement was the Clinton administration's primary foreign policy goal in Europe and an embassy priority. In a national referendum in late 1997, Hungary voted 85 percent in favor of membership, an overwhelming affirmation in advance of the U.S. Senate debate on expanding NATO to Eastern Europe.

Extensive media coverage of our January 1998 ceremony at the imposing Hungarian National Museum reminded Hungarians that the crown's 1978 return initiated the process of drawing Hungary back into the West, and the resultant good feeling enabled the first Fulbright grants in 1979. Commemorating the event signaled that joining NATO represented another important step along Hungary's journey from four decades under communist rule to a new future with the West.

Recognizing the trans-Atlantic usefulness of this narrative, the Hungarian government decided to present a $30,000 replica of the crown to the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia. President Arpad Goncz traveled to the United States to deliver it himself, stopping first in Washington.

On the day the Senate opened debate on NATO expansion, the crown was on view in the Capitol Rotunda. *The Washington Post* commented that the display would help Hungary's chances in the Senate, which subsequently voted May 1 in favor of the inclusion of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic in NATO.

Today, the return of the crown merits its own page on the U.S. Embassy Budapest website, which explains the thousand-year history of this symbol of the Hungarian nation. It also notes: "the decision by President Jimmy Carter to return the Crown in 1978 was a controversial one, and one which took political courage," adding that "the return of the Crown was both an occasion for improving U.S.-Hungarian relations and a device for pulling Hungary towards the west. It allowed the traditional warm relations between the two countries to resurface." ■

Beatrice Camp retired in 2015 from a Foreign Service career that took her to China, Thailand, Sweden and Hungary, in addition to assignments at the State Department and at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. She is editor of American Diplomacy*, an online journal.*

LOCAL LENS

BY HOWARD SOLOMON ■ GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

This image captures sunrise over Geneva's Old Town early in the morning of Nov. 14, 2020. At this time of year, the colors at sunrise are spectacular, but the combination of cold temperature, clouds rolling off Lake Geneva and the sun coming up from behind the French Alps was particularly dramatic. ■

Howard Solomon serves as minister counselor for multilateral economic and political affairs at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva. He took this photo with a Nikon D7200 using a Nikon Dx 55-300mm lens.

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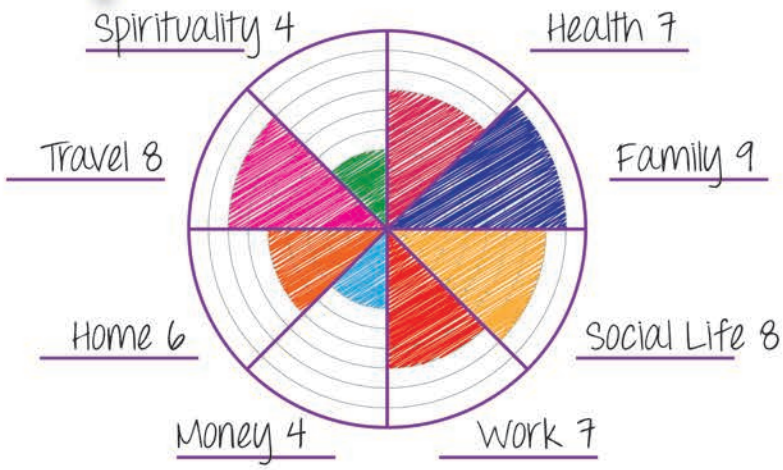

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