

## Executive Summary

To meet the challenges of the 21st Century, America's lead foreign affairs agency needs a transformation. As the world watched domestic extremists breach the Capitol building waving Confederate flags, terrorizing legislators, and threatening the very foundation of our democracy, the timing couldn't be more urgent. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to remake the State Department into an institution that leads by the power of example. We can course correct centuries of systemic injustice by laying the foundation for a Department grounded in equity, welcoming all of America's rich diversity. An inclusive diplomatic corps that champions innovation is essential to advancing core national security interests ranging from the pandemic to climate change to attacks on democracy at home and abroad.

There have been many attempts over decades to reform the State Department. This is the first such effort led by mid-career voices from a diverse range of lived experiences across areas such as race, gender, religion, ability, and sexual orientation. This Task Force report, "Transforming the State Department into a More Just, Equitable, and Innovative Institution," digs deep into root causes for why previous reform efforts have fallen short and provides concrete, actionable recommendations for both policymakers and legislators. Woven throughout the report are first-hand accounts from career diplomats highlighting key themes. The report will also serve as a launchpad for a broader sustained effort of more in-depth reform dialogues the Truman Center for National Policy plans to host over the coming months and years ahead.

The Task Force report is divided into three pillars. The first two pillars are inward-facing, identifying systemic issues and recommending specific reforms for the State Department as an institution. The third pillar looks beyond the Department to engage new and more diverse constituencies across America.

### Pillar 1: Laying a Strong Foundation for Transformation

- **Restoring Trust and Planting the Seeds for Renewal:** To build a solid foundation for collective healing, State Department leadership must start by acknowledging past traumas -- both deep-rooted structural discrimination that goes back decades as well as more recent political attacks against career officials. The Department also needs to understand current realities by expanding channels for employees of all levels to provide feedback without fear of reprisal.
- **Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms:** If the Department wants to retain diverse talent and pave the way for a healthy and productive workplace, employees must be safe and free from harassment and discrimination. This means strengthening accountability mechanisms, expanding resources for survivors, and promoting greater transparency in data collection and reporting.
- **Reimagining a More Inclusive and Innovative Ecosystem:** To address the risk-averse culture within the Department and promote overall efficiency, the State Department should champion innovation and dissenting ideas, streamline the flow of information to those who need it, upgrade outdated information technology infrastructure, and ensure greater equity in procurement processes.
- **Ensuring Greater Equity in Personnel Structures:** For the State Department to have a more well-rounded workforce where everyone has equitable access to professional opportunity and personal growth, the Department should rightsize the ratio of career officers to political appointees, optimize talent through personnel restructuring, and create more opportunities for cross-fertilization between the Civil and Foreign Service.

## Pillar 2: Building a State Department that Looks Like America

- **Creating Data-Driven Leaders:** Building a State Department that looks like America is both the right and the smart thing to do. This starts by appointing a powerful Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) who is sufficiently resourced and has access to transparent, accessible, and regularly collected diversity data. The State Department should also create an Office of the Chief Social Scientist (CSS) who would lead a new team of data scientists to work in collaboration with the CDIO. All interventions should be grounded in evidence and informed by the CSS and experts.
- **Sourcing Talent and Removing Barriers for Entry:** To more systematically and equitably source talent, the State Department should hire additional full-time recruiters who proactively include people of color, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups in outreach efforts. To ensure a more accessible pipeline for entry, the State Department should provide universal paid internships and more adequately staff Diplomatic Security to ensure security clearances can be processed in a more timely manner.
- **Promoting Fairness in Assignments and Promotions:** To ensure all employees feel they have equitable access to rise through the ranks, the State Department should pilot blind review in Employee Evaluation Report (EERs), ensure gender parity and racial equity in promotion panels, collect diversity data on promotions, and conduct a data-driven analysis on barriers for promotion. For more inclusive assignments processes, the CDIO should sign-off on all Office Director assignments, which serve as a springboard to senior leadership. The Department should transform the role of the Legal Advisor to enabling (rather than blocking) transparency efforts around collecting diversity data.
- **Cultivating and Retaining Diverse Talent:** Mentorship programs are proven to be effective in retaining talent. The Department should train volunteer mentors and sponsors to optimize the delivery of resources and quality of interactions with mentees. The State Department should also fund intensive mid-level leadership seminars designed specifically to help employees from historically underrepresented groups advance through the mid-level and into the senior ranks.

## Pillar 3: Broadening Diplomatic Engagement Across America

- **Increasing Linkages to States and Cities, Innovation Hubs, and Capitol Hill:** Mayors and governors are first responders to national security priorities like climate change, countering extremism, trade and investment, and pandemic recovery and response. The State Department should establish an Office of State and Local Diplomacy to serve as the connective tissue between state and local officials, American communities, and U.S. foreign policy. The State Department should also create an Office of Innovation Diplomacy to better connect innovation hubs across the U.S. to counterparts overseas. In addition, the State Department should explore more proactive engagement opportunities with Congress through the expansion of the Pearson Fellowship program and the assignment of more Civil and Foreign Service Officers to the State Department Legislative Bureau's House and Senate Liaison Offices.
- **Making the Case to the American Public for Why Diplomacy Matters:** To better tell the story of why diplomacy matters and how it affects the everyday realities of Americans across the country, the State Department should strengthen the hometown diplomat program, expand Diplomat-in-Residence programs across the country, and create an alumni network of former State Department employees who could serve as informal outreach ambassadors. It should also establish an Office of Entertainment Diplomacy to advise and brief studios, screenwriters, and producers who request insight into how the Department functions.
- **Expanding the Diplomatic Toolkit to Engage Diverse Audiences:** Modeled on the Department of Defense's university programs, the State Department should create a National Diplomacy University that grants graduate level degrees. The State Department should also establish a Diplomatic Reserve Corps or a cadre of diplomatic professionals from the Civil and Foreign Service trained to respond to surges in Department needs. And finally, the Department should cultivate greater ties with foreign policy networks across the country.

The recommendations outlined in this report range from low-lift interventions that can be operationalized right away to broader systemic changes that will require significant organizational redesign and a marshalling of new resources. We see this Task Force report as a critical first step in launching a sustained effort that will require partnership from policymakers, legislators, and the American people.