TRANSFORMING STATE
Pathways to a More Just, Equitable, and Innovative Institution

Photo by Brooks Kraft
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It is no secret that the State Department, our nation’s oldest Cabinet-level agency, needs to transform to meet the needs of the 21st century. Archaic technology and management practices, excessive aversion to risk, and hostility to innovation hold back the Department’s potential. The cultural aversion to change and modernization has held back the Department in another significant way – a continued failure to recruit and maintain a cadre of diplomats representing the true diversity of the United States. This report lays out a roadmap to address the structural and cultural barriers to building a modern diplomatic corps and engaging the American public in new, innovative ways.

At a time when America itself is more diverse than ever before, only 13% of the Department’s Senior Executive Service are people of color. Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American staff in senior levels across the Foreign and Civil Service have declined in recent years, from an already low baseline. This is a lost opportunity for American foreign policy. The United States is the leading advocate for human rights and equality overseas, and our arguments are much more credible when other nations see those values reflected in our embassies. A State Department workforce that more accurately reflects our population both contributes to better policy and improves the legitimacy of its work in the eyes of the American people.

There have been many efforts to reform the State Department, usually led by political appointees and with mixed buy-in from career staff. Democratic and Republican administrations alike have recognized the problems, as have management consultants and blue-ribbon commissions. And yet, little has changed. Transforming the culture of the Department will take long-term bipartisan commitment. Past reform efforts have often been hamstrung by short-term thinking and the fact they did not, or were not able to, solicit authentic and candid contributions from State Department staff, particularly mid-career officers on the frontlines of diplomacy.

Our report, *Transforming the State Department into a More Just, Equitable, and Innovative Institution*, engages those voices and maps out an actionable range of options for the new Administration. The report looks to reverse troubling diversity trends with an emphasis on evidence-based interventions and accountability. Diversifying the diplomats representing America will strengthen both the power of our example and the quality of our diplomacy.

The report also looks at how the Department can make the case to the American people for why a stronger U.S. diplomatic presence on the global stage improves their daily lives on everything ranging from international trade to climate change, combating disinformation, and coordinating a coherent pandemic response. By bolstering connectivity with state and local governments here at home and creating an office that leverages the talent of innovation hubs across the country, we recommend new partnerships the Department can tap to strengthen its foreign policy capabilities. At this moment of possibility, the Department and Congress both face an urgent responsibility to learn from the past and fully mobilize diplomacy for the benefit of the American people.

Letter from Co-Chairs

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley

Representative Joaquin Castro

Senator Chris Murphy

[Signatures]
Letter from CEO and President of the Truman Center for National Policy

Much ink has been spilled on the imperative for State Department reform, not just in the months leading up to the Biden administration, but over the last several decades. The prevalence of these reports—from CSIS’ Embassy of the Future\(^1\) project in 2007 to the Belfer Center’s \textit{A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century}\(^2\) and the Council on Foreign Relations’ \textit{Revitalizing the State Department and American Foreign Policy}\(^3\) reports in 2020 and many more in between—points to the constantly evolving nature of the work of diplomacy, but also to how resistant to change the agency has been.

Given that reality, why add one more effort to this esteemed body of work when so many previous efforts have been disregarded? The answer is threefold.

First, most of the other reports provided perspectives from senior, often retired officials, rather than those currently serving and at the working-level. Truman Center’s report is authored by a diverse group of mid-level current and former State Department officials. Moreover, while the Department itself has conducted several employee surveys over the years, many employees may be unwilling to be as candid as they would be with an outside group.

This report provides concrete recommendations grounded in the lived experience across the full range of State Department employment—not just Foreign Service, but those voices often overlooked: Civil Servants, contractors, Locally Employed Staff, as well as across underrepresented groups spanning race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Soliciting these views is essential because organizational and cultural change can come from the top, but its success depends on whether it is embraced by the mid-level officers charged with its implementation.

In consultation with our co-chairs, who are this nation’s leading foreign policy voices and with the generous review of other reports’ lead authors, we have sought to offer recommendations that are bold yet realistic and ripe for implementation. We offer recommendations not just for State Department officials but also for Congress, to whom the responsibility for the appropriate resourcing and oversight of the Department is entrusted, but who are often overlooked as a source of critical support to reform efforts.

Second, our report focuses principally on an agenda of justice, equity, and innovation as the core ingredients for true progress. For too long, American global leadership has ignored these animating features. We know that the rebirth of the State Department in this moment can only be achieved if all of this nation’s best talent have a seat at the table.

Lastly, working towards the continued evolution of the State Department, our nation’s lead foreign affairs agency, is a noble pursuit, and the new leadership has indicated it understands the urgent need for change. We must always toil in the fields of progress, no matter how unforgiving the land we encounter. Nations evolve, threats change, and alliances shift. American global leadership depends on the quality of its diplomats and the culture in which their expertise is continuously honed. Our diplomats deserve an agency that rewards and resources their best work.

Taken together, we believe that a State Department with these values at its core can advance policies with humility and confidence and with it seize a generational opportunity for renewal and reinvention. The American people deserve nothing less.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda  
CEO and President, Truman Center for National Policy

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About the Truman Center for National Policy

Truman is a nationwide membership of diverse leaders united in the belief that America is strongest when we stand with our allies to lead, support, and defend a growing global community of free people and just societies. Those responsibilities begin at home and extend across the world. Together, we unite across geography and industry behind common tools and principles, support each other in building new solutions to emerging challenges, and lead the way by thought and example.

Our community includes more than 2,000 veterans, frontline civilians, non-profit and private sector leaders, policy experts, and political professionals who share a common vision of U.S. leadership. We believe that America is at its best when we use all the tools in our toolbox: diplomacy, defense, development, and democracy promotion.

Truman Center for National Policy, along with our sister organization, Truman National Security Project, identifies, trains, and positions leaders across America who share this worldview. We bring our members together with our partners and advisors to deliver concrete solutions to pressing global challenges for local, state, and federal leaders. We coordinate their action nationwide across 16 chapters to shape debate and support rising leaders who share our values.

Truman Center for National Policy is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

Truman National Security Project Chapters
Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are the authors’ alone and do not necessarily reflect those of our supporters, sponsors and/or task force members. Task force members are participating in their personal capacities and not on behalf of their current employers.

This task force report is a comprehensive, consensus document. We acknowledge that there were dissenting views in some areas, and that, accordingly, not all members, supporters, or sponsors endorse all recommendations in the report.

* Denotes Truman National Security Member
Introduction

Transforming the State Department into a more just, equitable, and innovative institution is a long overdue national security imperative. An institution resistant to creativity and constructive dissent leads to group-think. A talent pool that is currently drowning in homogeneity misses out on matching qualified problem solvers to complex challenges. Amidst a pandemic, the rise in disinformation and digital authoritarianism, and waves of nativism and populism destabilizing democracies around the world, including our own, we are fraught with 21st Century foreign policy dilemmas that require harnessing all of the talent our great nation has to offer.

Our foreign policy starts at home. In 2020, a reckoning on race called for the dismantling of 400 years of systemic racism. Earlier this year, an armed insurrection of domestic extremists desecrated our Capitol Building with nooses and Confederate flags, threatening the foundation of our democracy and our nation’s core values. If we are unable to address threats to our own democracy, we lose the moral authority and reputational capital to promote peaceful transfers of power and human rights abroad.

One way to lead by the power of our example is to address the injustices embedded in our lead foreign affairs agency, the State Department. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination based on disability have challenged the State Department since its inception. The Department’s demographics look significantly less diverse at senior levels, with fewer people of color and women occupying these roles. According to a recent Government Accountability Office study, the State Department is behind other federal agencies in employing these historically underrepresented groups, especially at senior levels. This same study noted that Black women made up 2% of the Foreign Service in 2002, and the number only went up to 3% in 2018.

While there have been many reform efforts over decades, this report is the first to solicit candid feedback from career diplomats on the frontlines: mid-level officers from both the Civil and Foreign Service and across a wide range of underrepresented groups. In addition to identifying problems, we offer actionable solutions. We call for greater diversity data transparency, independent auditing on the progress of reforms, and evidence-based interventions. We also call for justice and accountability.

The State Department also has a “caste-like” system with informal cultures of hierarchy that can adversely affect morale. For example, policy officers are treated differently from administrative and management personnel, who are equally essential to advancing U.S. foreign policy. Further divides exist between political appointees and career staff, between the Civil and Foreign service, and between those working in regional bureaus (perceived to be more “career-enhancing”) and those in functional bureaus. This report offers a way forward to upend this stratified system and promote greater equity across the Department.

Lastly, we talk about how we can better harness one of our greatest foreign policy assets: Americans across the country. We call for the creation of an Office of State and Local Diplomacy to engage with governors and mayors on pandemic response, climate change, trade, refugee integration, and other foreign policy issues that affect Americans every day. We also propose the creation of an Office of Innovation Diplomacy to partner with decentralized innovation hubs across the country, from Austin to Detroit and Silicon Valley; an expansion of the Pearson fellowship program to promote greater connectivity with our colleagues on Capitol Hill; and broadening the reach of our Diplomat-in-Residence program to encourage a more inclusive pool of applicants. When the people who implement U.S. foreign policy are better connected with the diverse people and experiences that make up our country, they are better equipped to deliver a foreign policy that delivers for the American people.

A successful transformation and renewal will require policymakers, legislators, and the American people to join forces in a sustained effort. The time is now to act. Our nation’s security, prosperity, and integrity are at stake.

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 that 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.

### Executive Summary

**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.
Pillar 1
Laying a Strong Foundation for Transformation

1.1 - Restoring Trust and Planting the Seeds for Renewal
1.2 - Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms against Harassment and Discrimination
1.3 - Reimagining a More Inclusive and Innovative Ecosystem
1.4 - Ensuring Greater Equity in Personnel Structures

Introduction

Moments of crisis and transition offer opportunities for systemic change. The State Department has gone from one of the best-ranked large federal government agencies to work for to one of the lowest-ranked. In recent years, numerous press reports have documented the creation of “blacklists” of employees, the refusal of the Department to embrace dissent (including through formal processes like the official dissent channel), and a trust deficit between political appointees and their career diplomat counterparts. This collective trauma, from more recent political attacks as well as decades-long structural discrimination, must be publicly acknowledged and meaningfully addressed before the Department can lay the foundation for transformation and renewal.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms against harassment and discrimination can pave the way for a more healthy and productive workplace where all employees can thrive. It is important to note the existing difficulties in accessing current accountability systems. For example, only 3% of federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) claimants who go to administrative hearings win findings in their favor. This is not a reflection on the validity or severity of the complaint; it speaks to the difficulty in navigating a system that is costly in terms of time, money, and reputational harm to the victim. An Office of the Inspector General (OIG) survey of randomized direct hires showed that 47% of employees who had observed or experienced sexual harassment did not report it, demonstrating that sexual harassment is vastly underreported.

Acknowledging the past—by strengthening accountability mechanisms, promoting greater equity in personnel practices, and creating a more enabling ecosystem for innovation and inclusion—is needed imminently to ensure that the Department can realize its full potential to promote a more secure and prosperous world that benefits the American people.

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To renew the institution and restore trust, the State Department should acknowledge the past, understand the present, and prioritize mental health to lay the necessary groundwork for transformative culture change.

A. Acknowledging the Past

Policymakers:

- Given its long, documented history of structural bias and discrimination, particularly against people of color, women, naturalized Americans, members of the LGBT+ community, religious minorities, employees with disabilities, and other marginalized employees from protected classes, the Department should consider: (a) making public the results of internal assessments regarding the origins and impact of past discriminatory actions and systems; (b) issuing a formal, written apology to all those impacted by the practices of the past; and (c) issuing periodic, public progress reports on actions to rectify systems and practices enabling discrimination.

- The Secretary should acknowledge the harm inflicted upon career employees subjected to political retaliation, commit to redress the adverse effects on their careers and personal welfare, and seek accountability and personnel protections to prevent a recurrence.

- Create opportunities for State Department employees to tell their stories, including adversities faced, so they can be included in the Office of the Historian’s archive. This information can feed into an oral history public archive that documents the stories of State Department employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups, so that we can learn from the past to inform the future. A possible platform for additional collaboration could be StoryCorps which archives audio stories into the Library of Congress.

Legislators:

- Convene hearings, consultations, and other oversight exercises with all staff levels in bureaus/offices affected by political retaliation against career staff as well as with State Department mental health care providers and specialized trainers (e.g. Employee Consultation Services, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), and Teamwork@state) to understand the impact on the entire workforce and hear stories from individuals.

- Issue a Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), and/or relevant oversight committee report cataloging past abuses and pursue legislative and oversight guardrails to prevent future abuses.

- Reintroduce and pass the Lavender Offense Victim Exoneration Act, or “LOVE” Act (originally S. 1252 in the 116th Congress), which would require the State Department to establish a commission to review cases of individuals fired since the 1950s as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity; issue an apology; report on efforts taken to ensure foreign governments accredit same-sex married diplomats; and establish an advancement board to address issues faced by LGBT+ individuals and families.

9. Historians have long documented discrimination and bias across the Department’s history—whether it was once preventing married women from serving in the Foreign Service, the 20th century purging of LGBT+ employees, or the ongoing denial of opportunities for individuals based on their medical conditions or disability. Such institutionalized bias and discrimination even migrated into policy and operations, with profound impacts on foreign policy; for example, during World War II, the Department at times reduced the number of Jewish immigrants to the United States, even issuing fewer visas than the annual quota for Germany. See: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Americans and the Holocaust: Brekenridge Long.”

10. Precedent for apologies include Secretary Kerry’s 2017 apology for the Department’s past discrimination against LGBTI employees during the “Lavender Scare” that began in the 1940s and resulted in the dismissal of thousands of federal employees over decades. See: State Department. “Apology for Past Discrimination toward Employees and Applicants based on Sexual Orientation.” January 9, 2017.
B. Understanding the Present

Policymakers:

• Within the first six months, the Secretary should launch an organization-wide framework and reform process, co-led by senior officials from the Civil and Foreign Service, to examine current problems, propose solutions, and lay out a blueprint for implementation. The effort will address issues such as bare-bones staffing, low and uneven morale, workforce exhaustion, and underrepresentation, along with enacting guardrails to protect career employees from politicization and abuse.

• Senior leadership, including the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources (D-MR), Director General (DG), and all Under Secretaries, should convene small group briefings with staff to sensitize leadership to the need for reforms. This would help address the caste system within the Department that often gives officers at lower grades, locally-employed staff (LES), and essential workers in non-policy roles limited access to decision-makers. Senior leaders should mandate and welcome findings from focus groups that identify solutions to ongoing challenges.

• The Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, along with the proposed Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) should participate in the LES Council and use this platform within their first six months to host video consultations with select LES staff representatives in each region to emphasize the importance and value of LES work, affirm the State Department’s commitment to an inclusive, healthy work environment for all employees, and to hear directly from LE staff, as the largest category of Department employees, regarding morale, challenges, and priorities.

• Enhance data collection by actively promoting robust participation in the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)11 through new outreach tools, e.g. involving management and staff at all levels in outreach or establishing a "challenge" among bureaus to meet a response target. Each bureau should also hold consultations with incoming staff of all grades to discuss necessary bureau-level reforms.

• Supplement the State Department’s use of the FEVS with expanded use of the State Department OIG’s own climate survey, to solicit input from all categories of employees and in-person contractors. Rather than remain with each bureau’s executive offices (EX), as present, publish and use the results to identify additional systemic needs of the Department. The implementation of changes driven by survey data should be overseen by senior leadership (such as the Deputy Secretary and Director General).

Legislators:

• Congress should pass legislation establishing safeguards that preserve the integrity of accountability mechanisms in the Department and among federal employees, including equitable access to whistleblower protections and the independence of the OIG, such as by limiting the ability of a Secretary of State to unilaterally request dismissal of an Inspector General.12

C. Prioritizing Mental Health

Policymakers:

• Launch a Task Force charged with identifying cultural and systemic barriers keeping staff from seeking needed mental health services, and recommending the necessary systemic changes so that staff seek the help they need free of career implications, focusing on efforts by the Bureaus of Medical Services (MED), Diplomatic Security (DS), and Global Talent Management (GTM) as well as the Undersecretary for Management (M).

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Out of the long, tumultuous summer of 2020, a Civil Rights Movement has arisen in full, uniting Americans of all races, across different demographics and even economic classes, in a renewed push for basic human rights for Black Americans. The State Department has undergone its own reckoning and seen lots of committees, discussions, debates, and many proposals. These initiatives are needed and powerful, but they must be understood in the long historical context of the State Department’s battle to reflect America.

During my second tour in Nicaragua as a Foreign Service Officer, I completed my book, the *Historical Dictionary of the Civil Rights Movement*. During my research for this book, I was shocked to learn how intentional the early founders of the professional Foreign Service were in their efforts to exclude Blacks, women, and naturalized Americans. After Clifton Wharton, Jr., a Black man, joined in 1924, Joseph Grew (then Director General of the Foreign Service) spent 20 years ensuring no other Black American would join. Even after that period, the State Department actively worked to keep out Black Americans, often using the security clearance process or the oral examination to do so. The few who were able to join faced segregated eating facilities and outright racism well into the 1990s.

The most important lesson I learned in my research though is that as long as the State Department has fought to keep Black Americans out, there have been those who have fought – to varying degrees – to force the State Department to reflect America. There have been numerous lawsuits, committees, and Congressional hearings going back to the 1940s on the issue of race discrimination at State. George Schultz issued a statement in 1986 lamenting the “small number of blacks in senior positions ‘because’ it is of fundamental importance that the Service represent the cultural and ethnic diversity of our society.” Forty years ago, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 promised a Foreign Service more “representative of the American people” and reflected extensive Congressional input. Before that, there were other efforts: in 1953, the Department issued a report on the need for more inclusive hiring practices; in 1961, the Department held a conference on Equal Employment Opportunity; and later in the 1960s, the short-lived Foreign Affairs Scholar Program was meant to recruit African-American talent. Yet this issue persists.

Generally, what you will see is that people care passionately about this issue for a year or two then give up or move on. What will be needed is the same commitment and devotion to transforming the system as Joseph Grew had to keep Black Americans out for 20 years. We will need to be as committed to opening State as our predecessors were to keeping it closed. But we also need to be committed to understanding that our ideas now weren’t the first. We need to be as committed to learning the past to have a richer, fuller context if we are to transform and remake State.
1.2 - Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms against Harassment and Discrimination

We envision a State Department where all employees feel safe and free from harassment and discrimination. This means expanding resources for survivors, ensuring safety from retaliation, promoting greater transparency in data collection and reporting, and strengthening accountability mechanisms.

A. Expanding Resources for Survivors

Policymakers:

• Establish an Office of Employee Advocacy to provide guidance, operate an international 24/7 hotline, administer climate surveys, and house employee advocates to assist victims throughout the complaint process.

• Expand the State Department Family Advocacy Program to provide on-site victim advocacy to support domestic violence survivors in the location where they or their spouse or partner are assigned.

• Enhance current capabilities to create and grow specialized rapid-deployment squads with sufficient hours of specialized training to investigate sexual harassment and sexual assault complaints, jointly coordinated by the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) and DS.

• Expand resources available to survivors of violence, discrimination, bullying, harassment, domestic violence and other forms of dangerous conduct, including but not limited to ensuring a 24/7 safe reporting mechanism, allowing pseudonyms and/or anonymous filing, and making public allegations once charges are drawn up by appropriate authorities.

• Ensure post medical teams are prepared to collect evidence stemming from sexual assault that takes place abroad.

• Convert the EEO counselors to paid, direct hire positions with specialized expertise in trauma-informed response instead of voluntary, part-time positions. This could entail rotating positions covering regions or multiple posts in contexts for which demand is low for full-time support, and could be modeled after the Regional Medical Office/Psychiatrist and Regional Consular Officer roles.

• Improve bystander intervention training.\textsuperscript{13} EEO, sexual harassment and assault, and non-discriminatory harassment training for management and non-management employees alike to ensure that trainings are in plain language and that all employees know their rights under EEO, how to correctly report, and how to frame EEO, non-discriminatory harassment, and assault complaints.

• S/OCR and/or EEO counselors should inform all employees submitting an EEO complaint of their right to seek help from the Office of Special Counsel (Merit Service Protection Board) as a first-stop shop.

• Employee unions such as American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) should change their own rules to allow member dues to be used for plaintiff’s legal representation in cases of harassment, insider threat, EEO, and similar civil rights cases. This step will be unnecessary if Congress passes the State Harassment and Assault Prevention and Eradication (SHAPE) Act.

Legislators:

- Reintroduce and pass the State Harassment and Assault Prevention and Eradication Act, or “SHAPE” Act (originally HR 8465 in the 116th Congress), that would provide integrated victim services, eliminate mandatory non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), and provide plaintiffs’ attorneys to victims.
- Expedite the Department’s completion of EEO complaints, which often take years, including by expanding available staff, through new funding, and setting a firm performance target: processing EEO claims in six months or less.
- Pass legislation that creates and allocates funding for a Survivors’ Fund to resource victim-related services and EEO-related expenses.
- Increase the federal EEO compensatory award cap.

B. Prioritizing Safety from Retaliation

Policymakers:

- Remove supervisors from the supervisory chain when multiple cases of bullying, discrimination, or harassment are reported among their subordinates. Reassign raters and reviewers who have been reported for abuse and allow victims to request an immediate change of rater/reviewer to remove the threat of retaliation for reporting violence, harassment, EEO issues, etc.
- Ensure individuals who have pending or resolved EEO or harassment complaints against them do not ever participate in any Foreign Service promotion or assignment panels or submit 360 reviews for the complainant.
- Provide alternate work assignments for those who file complaints, including the provision of a detail to another assignment approved by GTM and the receiving entity, but not by the entity temporarily losing the employee.
- Explicitly incorporate dependents overseas into harassment protections as existing regulations allow.

Legislators:

- Pass legislation to lengthen the EEO filing deadlines for victims to two years (rather than 45 days), given that victims who remain assigned overseas with abusers fear retaliation and may delay reporting.

C. Ensuring Transparency in Reporting

Policymakers:

- Following the practice employed by Congress, annul all Department imposed NDAs from settlements reached with victims of discrimination, assault, and harassment, or retaliation so that there is accountability to the American public regarding cases where the aggrieved party wishes their case to be made known to Congress and/or the public. This will make the public aware of how much was paid out in settlements and the demographic category memberships for the persons with whom the Department settled (such as gender, race, age, etc).
- Track, report, and improve EEO timelines, including how long the Department averages to bring each case to completion and the number of cases filed and pending each year. Voluntarily disclose in the Department’s public No Fear Act reporting the total number of EEO complaints that go to settlement.
- Require GTM and S/OCR to share information and create a consolidated list of employees against whom grievances and discrimination or harassment complaints have been filed, as well as employees the OIG has investigated. (Because these matters are investigated by separate offices, repeat offenders are not currently tracked). This list should be reviewed annually together with the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) and repeat offenders must have documentation included in their annual performance files and Section 45 of their SF-50, if a formal finding of discrimination is made or settlement reached that found the claim credible.
- Drawing from current best practices at USAID, establish reporting pathways for Full Time Employee (FTE) managers of contractors to report EEO violations impacting contracting personnel they oversee to contracting companies, including contractors who perpetrate or are victims of abuse.
- Share the final written results of all investigations for issues such as EEO, harassment, and retaliation with the victims, when complete.
- Continue encouraging exit interviews for all employees and in-person contractors leaving the Department to provide useful insights into their professional and personal experiences and their rationale for departure, including information as to whether adverse actions against the employee were among the reasons for their departure. Protect and anonymize the information and inform the departing individual how the information is stored and used. Develop metrics and report and release findings to the State Department community.
• Change the Civil Service performance evaluation process to allow reporting of supervisory malfeasance, including harassment, which can be submitted by all forms of subordinates, including direct hire Americans, eligible family members, Locally Employed staff, and contractors overseas and in the United States, and retain in personnel records for four years. The Bureau's Human Resources Officers should log the initial complaints, documenting the behavior and transmitting it to both the employee relations office (GTM/ER) and the performance evaluation office (GTM/PE).

• Require the Department to include language in the annual performance review and personnel file for all employees against whom the Department or EEOC has investigated and either settled with the complainant or made a formal finding of discrimination/harassment. This language must remain permanently in the file/performance review and multiple findings should require termination of the employee.

• Expand the information included in the Certificates of Competency required for all Ambassadors, both career and non-career, to include an assessment of the nominee’s track record in advancing diversity and inclusion as well as discrimination/harassment complaints or other such adverse findings.

Legislators:

• Require Department submission of information regarding both allegations and findings of EEO violations, harassment, retaliation, and other adverse conduct in all nomination packages for Senate-confirmed positions. Act on this information by refusing to confirm abusers to office.

• Provide a confidential channel whereby victims can share with Senate leadership information about nominees against whom they have filed complaints of bullying, discrimination, or harassment before that employee’s confirmation hearing.

• Vote to confirm nominees who commit publicly to providing a one-stop shop for data on accountability topics to personnel, Congress, and the public, especially for the “big eight” accountability positions, i.e. Deputy Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary for Management Resources, Under Secretary for Management, Director General, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of the Legal Advisor, and Director of the Office of Civil Rights.

• Require the Department to publish sexual harassment and sexual assault statistics, including data on the total number of allegations that resulted in adverse findings.

• Pass legislation to annul mandatory NDAs on settlements related to EEO and similar cases throughout the Federal Government and require disclosures of settlements.

• Require the Department to publish information on settlement amounts by category as part of its annual No Fear Act reporting.

D. Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms

Policymakers:

• Publish and enforce a codified set of actions and consequences for perpetrators of harassment, assault, and discrimination in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). This should include protocols that depart from the practice of simply making complainants “whole” and lean toward “one and done” for perpetrators, resulting in stronger consequences for offenders for completed investigations resulting in either settlements to the complainant or formal findings of discrimination or harassment by S/OCR or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Such punishments should include termination or a ban from holding senior leadership positions and supervisory positions.

• Remove any individuals with multiple, credible EEO discrimination, harassment, retaliation, grievances and other adverse complaints from consideration by the selection and review panels for senior positions such as Ambassadors, Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCMs), Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and Office Directors. Specifically, the existence of EEO/harassment complaints against a candidate must be shared both with Bureau Front Offices (which form the short lists for senior overseas assignments and make final decisions about senior domestic assignments) as well as with the Deputies Committee (which makes final decisions for chief of mission positions). This may require a new regulation from OPM as domestic employees are considered federal civilians which falls under Title V of CFR.
• Create employee scorecards that include expanded, anonymized reviews shared with employees, supervisors, and hiring offices. This scorecard would promote professional development and self-awareness, and increase accountability for toxic behaviors by allowing supervisors, peers, and subordinates to confidentially share concerns about all employees’ performance or conduct.

• The EEOC should hold hearings and other oversight exercises on the implementation of current EEO processes across the federal government to identify changes needed to improve the current EEO process, where very few cases ever reach final settlement or result in a formal finding of discrimination. Mandate timelines to complete the investigation and resolution of all cases, including ones elevated outside of the Department to Administrative Courts or the EEOC, which currently can take multiple years to resolve.

Legislators:
• Hold specific HFAC, SFRC, and relevant oversight committee hearings dedicated to strengthening accountability in the State Department at least twice per session of Congress (i.e. in 2021, then annually), which can include testimony from willing survivors where a finding has been made and which guarantees survivors from retaliation. The Congress should forewarn the executive that it will not tolerate any retaliatory actions taken by the Department to those current employees who testify on the Hill. The Department has a history of engaging in active negative actions against those who testify, even if subpoenaed.

• Ask questions regarding harassment, discrimination, and the response to it during all Senate confirmation hearings for Department of State nominees for managerial roles.

• Disqualify S/OCR from defending the Department in EEO cases as this creates a conflict of interest given its role as the lead investigative body for EEO claims.
In the wake of #MeToo, my own experiences as a survivor of harassment while serving as a diplomat at the State Department inspired me to build a peer-to-peer network to help other victims and serve as a co-advisor to Congress on the State Harassment Assault and Prevention Eradication (SHAPE) Act. It’s a victims’ rights bill and the first of its kind — providing protection to victims, including no mandatory non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), one place to go, and legal representation for victims—while also creating consequences for perpetrators.

When I graduated from Wharton and joined the State Department, I never would have imagined the conditions of my departure over a decade later — under an NDA, medically retired, and vowing to help other women fight harassment.

I had felt a calling to be a diplomat since the age of 15. After doing indigenous rights advocacy in multilateral fora in Geneva during a college internship, I was hooked. After working as a consultant and earning my MBA, I joined the State Department. As a career Foreign Service Officer, I was finally living my dream by serving as a diplomat for over a decade with distinction overseas, on the Secretary of State’s staff, and briefing the Spokesperson about national security issues daily.

My time at State was marred by episodes of harassment that had profound impacts on my career, finances, and health. Harassment is not a victimless crime. During my tenure at State, I experienced gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and finally severe emotional and verbal harassment, hazing, disability discrimination, and abuse. When I attempted to report my sexual harassment to an HR director, she screwed her eyes shut, plugged her ears, and told me, “No names!” The discrimination and harassment triggered a serious illness.

I documented the abuse I was facing to over 20 officials, but nothing was done. Finally, I felt I had no choice but to file an EEO claim. Even after my EEO claim was resolved in my favor, it became clear there were no systemic impacts or punitive effects on the abusers’ careers. I realized my abusers would keep abusing other women unless I did something more. I understood I was one of many. I knew if this could happen to me, it could happen to anybody. And so frequently does. According to the recent State OIG report on sexual harassment, there were 635 reports of sexual harassment and over 100 reports of sexual assault from 2014-2017. And this is a low estimate: an OIG survey showed that 47% of employees who had experienced or observed sexual harassment within the last two years did not report it.

I knew I had to take action, and bring others along with me. I did not want any other women to experience what I went through. During the summer of 2018, I provided testimony to the OIG for its investigation into pervasive sexual harassment and assault at State. OIG published its report in October 2020, noting that reports of sexual harassment had increased 63% and reports of sexual assault had increased 71% from 2014-2017. The report explores the lack of data, coordination, and accountability around sexual harassment, and that victims often fear retaliation and lack confidence in the department’s ability to resolve sexual harassment complaints, which echoed my own experiences. While the results of the investigation are kept secret from the victim, the alleged perpetrators are given access to the investigative file and allowed to submit comments to the disciplinary official to determine an “appropriate” penalty.

After hearing testimony from State officials at a hearing at the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights (USCCR) Summer 2019, I submitted an open letter endorsed by over 15 officers at State offering testimony about experiences and trends from the perspective of survivors, which USCCR quoted in their April 2020 Report on #FedMeToo. In parallel, to mitigate the sense of isolation so many feel, I brought survivors together in solidarity to forge a community so that we could give each other guidance and emotional support.

The USCCR open testimony letter drew the attention of Rep. Jackie Speier, whose office invited me and our growing network to submit comments on the SHAPE Act. Our recommendations were incorporated, and Truman Center for National Policy CEO Jenna Ben-Yehuda and I met personally with Rep. Speier and her colleagues to discuss the SHAPE Act and the most effective approach to fighting sexual harassment at the Department.

Our network continues to grow. We look forward to helping promote the passage of SHAPE to protect our national security and our most valuable assets—our people.
1.3 - Reimagining a More Inclusive and Innovative Ecosystem

We envision a State Department that champions innovation and dissenting ideas, streamlines the flow of information to those who need it, upgrades outdated information technology infrastructure, and ensures transparency and equity in procurement processes. The new D-MR is best positioned to lead in this area.

A. Cultivating Innovation and Championing Dissent

Policymakers:

• Ambassadors, Regional Bureau Assistant Secretaries, and other senior bureau officials should encourage innovative reform ideas by creating the Innovation Cable and announcing awards for Innovation programs and initiatives in collaboration with AFSA. Innovative initiatives may include forming new partnerships with unlikely allies such as faith or business leaders or academic institutions, providing a fresh perspective to negotiations which kickstart new negotiations to regional conflicts, and/or devising new procedures to accelerate passport processing.

• The State Department should expand the mandate of the current Innovation Office to establish tools and pathways that lower the Department’s aversion to risk and spur innovation in policy, management, and operations, with a view toward preparing the Department for 21st century challenges that address morale, security, inclusion, and productivity goals.

• The Secretary of State should publicly announce that the “Dissent Channel,” a pathway for vibrant internal discourse around foreign policy and management issues, is fully operational and should encourage submission of dissent cables. The Secretary should underline that no employee will face retribution for dissent; that the Dissent Channel process will be reviewed to ensure all dissent cables reach the Secretary of State and other senior officials; and that authors of dissent cables receive a formal, substantive response regarding concerns raised.

• Ambassadors, regional bureau Assistant Secretaries, and other senior bureau officials should also encourage the submission of dissent cables.

• Work with AFSA to ensure Civil Service employees and contractors, in addition to Foreign Service personnel, can receive awards for dissent cable submissions.

Legislators:

• Congress should require the State Department to report on the number of dissent and innovation cables submitted as well as their subject and any follow-on actions by senior Department leadership every year.

B. Modernizing Information Technology Infrastructure

Policymakers:

• Ensure that the State Department’s Information Technology (IT) system is secure, agile, and mobile for its 21st century workforce, particularly post-COVID. Establishing a tiered access, updated unclassified system for the State Department is an inclusion priority for remote workers. The Department should resume its efforts to modernize its IT systems for all employees (not just Executive employees) initiated in 2017.

• M, in collaboration with the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM), should hire experts in remote work and distributed team management to evaluate the successes and challenges of delivering remote infrastructure services during the pandemic and institutionalize remote work processes to sustain telework opportunities following the pandemic, including addressing issues related to classified remote access.
• To reduce employee confusion about their entitlements to a range of benefits and allowances—from eldercare to emergency childcare—the Department should streamline existing online platforms to establish a “one-stop-shop” for all benefits and employee assistance matters, including unique services available to all employee classifications and contractors.

• Undertake an audit of all IT contracts over $10 million to identify duplication and unnecessary siloing in order to establish an approach/strategy to ensure all IT contracts are aligned, secure, and mutually reinforcing in meeting IRM’s strategic plan. The new Chief Information Officer (CIO) should commit to fully executing the IRM strategic plan until its planned end date.

• Invest in better IT and other infrastructure to work from home for both employees and EFMs, such as secure and easily accessible virtual workspaces.

• M should ensure IT security, led by the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM), and physical security, led by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), strategy and operationalization should be complementary and the decision makers and stakeholders for both should be aligned on how each strategy allows the Department’s employees to work in a way that meets the demands of the 21st century.

• For IT procurement, end the Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) practice of selecting lowest bidders and use existing authorities that empower a higher quality, “best bidder” model. This will lead to better IT, cybersecurity, and human capital outcomes.

• Evenly execute Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) standards for acquisition announcements related to new and recompete opportunities for third-party vendors, including clear and timely posts about vendor opportunities.

• Require that acquisitions awards incorporate metrics on expertise and qualifications for all small business contractor categories.

C. Promoting Equity in Procurement

Policymakers:

• In addition to standard acquisitions training, require issue-specific training for acquisitions officers related to the missions of the DOS offices/bureaus they serve to bolster understanding of their client’s bureaus, such as in human rights or gender equality policy mandates of relevant clients.

• Use the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) to establish and annually review a database of contracts that do not meet targets and deliverables, controlling for awards that are inherently high-risk, and consult such data when making acquisition decisions for new contracting bids submitted by previously-underperforming vendors.

• Hold acquisitions management personnel accountable for routinely evaluating contract performance by requiring that performance evaluations be documented in a transparent manner and logged in a shared database (e.g. FAPIIS).

• Conduct an anonymous survey of current vendors providing services to the Department to identify challenges they face in the acquisitions process as well as recommendations for transparency and streamlining processes.

D. Streamlining Processes

Policymakers:

• Launch a review, led by the Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H), of annual and more frequent Congressional Reports to identify redundancies and outdated and/or unnecessary reports, to be sent to Congress with recommendations for elimination and deconfliction.

• Under the direction of D-MR, P and M should co-launch a Task Force with a mandate to rightsize the regional and functional bureaus based on current workloads, geopolitical challenges, and future areas of greatest need.

• Evaluate reporting structure for all country-specific Special Envoy offices. Revisit each Special Envoy and eliminate all but the most important ones, instead placing a specific DAS in relevant regional or functional bureaus in charge of these high-profile issues.

Legislators:

• Quickly consider for confirmation State Department nominees for senior positions, as well as State Department promotion and tenure lists for career personnel.

• Eliminate duplicative and dated Congressional reporting requirements, working in conjunction with a State Department Task Force tasked with identifying these wasteful and expensive reports.

• Encourage Senate and House leadership offices to determine whether CODELS or STAFFELS to overburdened posts, especially those with travel warnings who receive a large volume of Congressional visitors relative to their staffing size, are mission critical and where critical, consider joint travel with Department officials to minimize burden.
Ensuring LGBT+ Rights are Protected
Hammad B. Hammad, U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer

The Department has come a long way since the Lavender Scare, an effort in the 1950s to root out LGBT+ employees from the U.S. government. Yet much work remains for employees to achieve full equality.

For example, each bidding cycle, thousands of LGBT+ officers have to navigate figuring out whether and how certain countries will accredit their same-sex spouses. In some countries, accreditation could be given one year, and changed the next, causing many employees undue hardship in figuring out whether their loved ones can accompany them to their post of assignment. Over 70 countries do not accredit same-sex spouses and family members of diplomats. In many cases, LGBT+ employees may not be able to serve in career-enhancing hardship posts or where they are fluent in the language due to accreditation issues. As a native-Arabic speaker, I have chosen to serve more often in the Western Hemisphere in countries where my husband can accompany me than in countries where I could use my Arabic language skills. The Department can and should do more to advocate for same-sex accreditation including by issuing instructions to Ambassadors to engage the highest levels of the host government to grant diplomatic privileges and immunities to LGBT+ personnel (including personnel with HIV/AIDS, who are not allowed to serve in many countries), and reciprocating by refusing to grant opposite-sex couples of countries that discriminate in their treatment of U.S. officials’ spouses.

Being a gay Arab-American diplomat representing the United States abroad has been extremely rewarding, as I have been able to change the perspective of audiences overseas of what it means to be an American, as well as connect with a wide range of people to advance U.S. priorities. The Department has achieved progress since I joined, including by offering the same benefits to married same-sex spouses as opposite-sex spouses following the 2015 Supreme Court ruling. The Department needs to do more—not only on accreditation, but also on transgender rights and naming more LGBT+ officials (especially of color, transgender, bi, and lesbian) to leadership positions, to ensure LGBT+ employees are treated equally to continue to attract and retain LGBT+ employees.
1.4 - Promoting Equity and Effectiveness in Personnel Structures

We envision a State Department with a well-rounded workforce that promotes equitable access to personal growth and professional opportunity. This means providing greater workplace flexibility, mechanisms to innovate and cross-fertilize ideas within the building and broader interagency, and rightsizing the balance between career officers and political appointees.

A. Optimizing Talent

• The State Department should create a mid-career Foreign Service specialist entry program in new areas that require targeted expertise. This would be a way to both diversify the mid-level ranks and match skills to meet the challenges of the 21st Century in areas like global health, technology, data literacy, and climate change.

• The White House should consider creating new or expanding existing Foreign Service cadres across a range of U.S. government agencies. This would broaden the talent pool of career diplomats with specialized expertise in fields like health, commerce, labor, and energy while also strengthening connectivity between domestic agencies and global policy. 14

• The DG should also review the Foreign Service’s generalist model to assess whether it sufficiently addresses the emerging needs of the Department, particularly in meeting emerging and complex 21st century challenges through internal specialist expertise.

• GTM should unbundle the Environment, Science, Technology, and Health (ESTH) job codes within the Foreign Service into separate hiring categories for environmental experts, natural science experts, information technology experts, and health experts.

• Increase the scope and scale of higher education and long-term training programs, including with business schools, law schools, IT and data programs, and scientific and social scientific programs beyond political science, international relations, and economics, including more opportunities for career staff to also take leave to teach in relevant programs. Elevate the importance of these training opportunities for promotions.

• Establish a mandatory one-day orientation within the first week of duty for all contractor personnel focused on socializing the State Department and its mission and highlighting their role in supporting it, with a view toward fostering a broad workplace culture committed to supporting that mission.

Legislators:

• Expand budgetary support to the Foreign Service to increase diplomatic bandwidth, skill, and capacity to meet the needs of the 21st Century.

• Amend the Civil Service Act to ensure safeguards against the erosion of federal workforce protections through the creation or amendment of excepted services, such as the recently rescinded Schedule F proposal in EO 139759.

B. Rightsizing the Ratio of Career Diplomats to Political Appointees

Policymakers:

- Commit to staffing at least 75% of all Senate-confirmed positions domestically and abroad with career officials.

- Efforts to improve diversity in senior leadership positions should prioritize considering current Senior Foreign Service (SFS) and Senior Executive Service (SES) members from underrepresented groups before nominating outside appointees, as relying predominantly on an influx of political appointees to improve diversity in the senior ranks has the unintended consequence of limiting the advancement potential of the small proportion of career officers from underrepresented groups who are ranked FS-01 and GS-15 and above.

- Ensure political appointees who recently “burrowed” into career positions are identified and objectively reviewed for qualifications; consider termination whenever warranted.

- Remove Foreign Service-only designation on senior Department positions (DAS and above) to expand opportunities for qualified Civil Service officers at the GS-15 and SES level classifying them as “temporary” (maximum five-years’ tenure under the Code of Federal Regulations) to ensure new ideas and energy are brought into leadership across the Department.

- Include a greater proportion of senior career officials on the internal Deputies Committee and other assignment committees that recommend Ambassador-ranked positions.

- Consider time limits for positions at Office Director/Deputy and above so both Civil and Foreign Service officers rotate more frequently to different assignments.

- Require all incoming non-career appointees to undergo training in leadership, management, and Washington tradecraft within three months of onboarding.

- Review the use of special hiring mechanisms across the Department, specifically their use in manager/supervisory positions. Some hiring mechanisms, such as General Government, are excepted service non-tenure positions but are used for management/supervisory positions and for long-term training positions at FSI. These employees engage in all the same functions as GS scheduled employees but do not gain tenure or internal to the agency status which limits promotion potential and leads to attrition, while also keeping qualified civil servants from switching to training roles at FSI.

Legislators:

- Pass legislation to ensure the recently rescinded Executive Order (EO) 13957 “Creating Schedule F in the Civil Service” cannot be reinstated in future administrations.

- Appropriate funds to increase hiring for both the Foreign Service and Civil Service, including more A-100 classes (the introductory training for incoming Foreign Service Officers) to expedite deployment of personnel, expand student programs (e.g. Pathways), and expand the Presidential Management Fellows program including through hiring at the higher levels modeled by other agencies.

C. Creating More Opportunities for Cross-Fertilization

Policymakers:

- Promote greater equity across the Department by ensuring all Under Secretaries rotate in deputy-level interagency meetings when D is unavailable. This will signal that all Under Secretary roles, particularly those overseeing functional or management roles, have equal value to their counterpart P which oversees policy in regional bureaus.

- Provide more mid- and senior-level opportunities for medium- and long-term overseas rotations to qualified Civil Service officers and ensure their families have the same support as Foreign Service personnel when overseas.

- Create an official excursion program for Civil Service officers to take advantage of professional development opportunities outside of the Department, ensuring officers would not have to resign or reapply for their position, similar to FSOS conducting such details or long-term training opportunities. Ensure families of such personnel have the same support as Foreign Service staff.

- Expand the conversion program for Civil Service employees to transition from specialist or operational roles into foreign affairs professional series positions.

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D. Enhancing Quality of Life

- Engage in robust diplomacy with foreign governments to protect U.S. personnel and ensure all American personnel, their families, and LES are free of harassment by their host governments.
- Establish a working group comprised of representatives from M, P, GTM, regional bureaus, and the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) and Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) to develop, implement, and monitor an action plan to expand the number of countries that accredit same-sex married couples.
- Require the Overseas Building Office (OBO), COMs, Assistant Secretaries, and Directors to comply with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) at all facilities, and coordinate with international organizations to ensure the same level of access at all such facilities where U.S. delegations are accredited.
- Strengthen OBO reviews of existing embassies and new embassy compound plans to ensure they are ADA-compliant. In addition, provide any individuals with a visual or hearing impairment the proper accommodations overseas, including providing sign language interpreters (who are fluent in English, American Sign Language, and the official local language(s)), readers for visually impaired employees, and making software at embassies accessible for screen readers, and other necessary accommodations.
- Leverage management best practices developed during the pandemic and continue committing to greater workplace flexibility, including flex hours, job sharing, and telework.
- Expand Domestic Employee Telework Overseas (DETO), and Remote Work Arrangement opportunities for all Civil and Foreign Service Officers who require workplace flexibility for personal reasons.
- Expand Leave Without Pay (LWOP) options for up to five years for both Civil and Foreign Service officers who need time with family, wish to take time to recharge, attend graduate school, or gain a different skill set. Ensure those on LWOP have remote access to State email and limited intranet access for administrative needs and smoother re-entry.
- Expand full-time and emergency childcare and elder care options and subsidies. Include these options and subsidies for contractors and individuals serving overseas.
- During evacuations and drawdowns, ensure that all impacted employees receive: (a) 100% childcare funding; and (b) standardized administrative leave periods to address family needs during and after abrupt relocations.
I know that my story is one of many in which officers have faced career repercussions for seeking mental health care—and by no means the most egregious. I have lost track of the number of colleagues and friends who have told me they chose not to seek mental health care for fear of jeopardizing their medical or security clearance. I know officers who have chosen to pay for mental health care out of pocket rather than make a claim through their State Department health insurance due to fear of stigma. I know officers who time when they will seek mental health support around when their medical or security clearance is up for review. I know officers and family members who are forced to relive traumatic events whenever their medical or security clearance is up for renewal via a series of impersonal and invasive questions from reviewers who are unfamiliar with their medical history and do not seem skilled in how to handle the recall of traumatic events.

The Department emphasizes the importance of “resilience.” However, encouraging “resilience” while maintaining an outdated and harmful attitude toward seeking mental health treatment only leads to an environment in which officers white-knuckle their way through challenging situations. This makes officers less resilient and sets officers—and the Department—up for failure, and contributes to toxic, and bullying behavior overall. This approach to mental health also doubly victimizes officers facing harassment and discrimination within the Department. We cannot talk about healing and accountability at the Department without ensuring that all officers are fully supported in seeking the health care that is appropriate for their needs.

During the last half of my first tour, I experienced two painful medical evacuations and served as the Embassy’s primary political reporting officer during a stressful post-conflict electoral period. After returning to Washington, I had serious difficulties readjusting to the pace of language training while working through lingering emotional impacts from my tour, including regular panic attacks. I sought out the support of mental health professionals, and made the decision with my doctor to go on a low dosage of anti-anxiety and antidepressant medication.

By the time my transfer date neared, I felt mentally and physically ready to tackle a new assignment, and grateful that I had the time and resources during language training to prioritize my health. However, when I reported during my medical clearance renewal that I was taking antidepressants, my clearance was immediately downgraded to a Class 2. My only interaction with a doctor at Med before this notification was a ten minute phone call in which the (male) doctor conducting the evaluation asked general questions about my alcohol intake and whether I’d ever considered hurting myself, before encouraging me to enjoy my onward assignment in western Europe.

My primary care doctor said they were never contacted, and would have encouraged a Class 1 clearance if they had been asked. Prior to bidding for my third tour, I reached out to the Department’s Medical unit to ask for a reassessment, since several of the posts I was interested in required a Class 1 clearance. The person I spoke with over the phone asked why I wanted to serve in “hard places” and joked that I should enjoy western Europe. By the time I resigned from the State Department in October 2017, I still had not received a clear answer about how to have my medical clearance re-assessed. I feel that I was punished for seeking mental health support and being transparent about it with the Department and that my attempts to restore my medical clearance to a Class 1 were met with a condescending and tone-deaf attitude.

I know my story is one of many in which officers have faced career repercussions for seeking mental health care—and by no means the most egregious. I have lost track of the number of colleagues and friends who have told me they chose not to seek mental health care for fear of jeopardizing their medical or security clearance. I know officers who have chosen to pay for mental health care out of pocket rather than make a claim through their State Department health insurance due to fear of stigma. I know officers who time when they will seek mental health support around when their medical or security clearance is up for review. I know officers and family members who are forced to relive traumatic events whenever their medical or security clearance is up for renewal via a series of impersonal and invasive questions from reviewers who are unfamiliar with their medical history and do not seem skilled in how to handle the recall of traumatic events.

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Pillar 2
Building a State Department that Looks Like America

2.1 - Creating Data-Driven Leaders

2.2 - Sourcing Talent, Removing Barriers to Entry, and Addressing Pay Equity

2.3 - Promoting Greater Fairness in Assignments and Promotion Processes

2.4 - Cultivating and Retaining Diverse Talent

Introduction

Building a State Department that looks like America is both the right and the smart thing to do. The Department must take immediate action through concrete, evidence-based interventions to ensure that all ranks, especially at the senior levels, are representative of the rich diversity of the nation.

Creating an agile, inclusive Department that can both source and retain diverse talent requires a powerful Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer with access to transparent and regularly collected data. Addressing systemic barriers to entry, with a focus on underrepresented groups, should be a topline Department priority. To increase retention, the Department should take steps to mitigate bias in the assignments and promotions processes. Finally, the Department should ensure equitable access to mentors and training so all Department employees are set up for success and can realize their full potential.
2.1 - Creating Data-Driven Leaders

We envision a State Department whose diverse talent is unleashed to serve the American people. Diversity work is the work of managers and Department senior leadership. Achieving equity and inclusion while increasing talent diversity requires leaders to: 1) liberate data with transparent and broadly accessible dashboards to track diversity and inclusion over time; 2) advance accountability beyond mere self-assessment to verify data analysis with external academic experts; and 3) lead change by regularly using the improved data to set and reach diversity and inclusion goals.

A. Appointing a Powerful Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer:

Policymakers:

- Appoint a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) at the Under Secretary-level reporting directly to the Secretary. This person should have a dedicated operational budget and a full staff which, beginning in the first 90 days of the new administration, has access to all Department personnel data.

- Clearly define the mandate of the CDIO to: (a) dismantle structural barriers to recruitment, promotion, and retention of underrepresented groups; (b) enforce transparency by collecting and disseminating data about the Department's progress on diversity including promotions, assignments, and attrition internally; (c) implement accountability mechanisms to change the Department's culture of impunity for discrimination, harassment, and bullying; (d) promote mentorship and sponsorship for underrepresented groups; (e) convene executive task forces on each organizational unit's diversity numbers; (f) launch a diversity data dashboard that automates the update of data visualizations accessible to the public; (g) sit on selection committees for senior assignments, including permanent assignment to the "D committee," as well as DCM/Principal Officer selection boards; and (h) collaborate with other CDIOs across federal agencies and the private sector to share best practices and lessons learned.

- Clearly define the job of the CDIO to exclude: (a) spending more than 5% of their time on external-facing public relations, including panel discussions; (b) facing accountability for the inaction of executives and managers with line evaluative control of personnel (e.g. Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Ambassadors, etc.); nor (c) focusing more than 5% of their time on diversity training or other Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) learning & development programs, which do not drive results.

- Create a reporting structure to the CDIO position by mandating every bureau and independent office establish a Senior Advisor position (FS-01 equivalent or higher) focused on Diversity and Inclusion, to be filled by either a Foreign or Civil Service officer. All senior advisors will actively engage in the following key decision-making processes in the Bureau-level: assignments, strategies, and internal human resource policies. Advisors would be rated by the principal deputy assistant secretary (PDAS) and reviewed by the CDIO.

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16. Dimensions of diversity can include: race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, persons with disabilities defined under the ADA as both visible and invisible, sex, class, and sexual orientation.

17. Because feelings of inclusion can be especially high in groups that are homogenous, it is essential that the Department build diverse teams centered around a common mission rather than homogeneity hiring. Research shows that inclusive teams are more productive and effective, especially when that diversity is well-managed and acknowledged; applied to the Department, promoting inclusion should be considered central to executing the Department’s global mandate. See: Rock, David and Heidi Grant. “Diverse Teams Feel Less Comfortable — and That’s Why They Perform Better.” Harvard Business Review. September 16, 2016.

Legislators:
- Congress should mandate establishment of a CDIO and appropriate the requisite budget for this position and office.
- Congress should protect the CDIO with the rank, interviewing rights, and all privileges of a “Special Inspector General.” This step is especially necessary if the CDIO is not a political appointee with a long history of direct professional ties to the Secretary.
- Congress should treat the testimony of the CDIO as it does the presentations of the OIG.
- Congress should ensure racial equity in senior ranks through the appointee process.

Policymakers:
- The Secretary should immediately and drastically increase racial diversity among senior executive leadership (the “seven floor”), including Senate-confirmed positions of Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries to overcome the paucity of racial diversity among appointee announcements (as of January 2021) in light of the Department’s poor track record on diversity and at a time in which racial equity is at the forefront of national public discourse.

C. Promoting Diversity Data Transparency

Policymakers:
- The State Department should create the Office of the Chief Social Scientist (CSS), an in-house academic expert, who would lead a new team of data scientists to work in collaboration with the CDIO to launch and maintain diversity and inclusion data dashboards.
- Building on the progress made by the in-house management consultants at the M Bureau, the Department can save funds by enhancing its in-house expertise with social scientists (e.g. organizational sociologists, labor economists, event-history modellers) and leveraging expert evidence to achieve continual organizational renewal.
- The office of the CSS should report to M. The office should absorb the staff and duties of the Office of Management Strategy and Solutions. The new office should absorb the GTM bureau’s organizational psychologist position. The office should add new positions for any PhD-qualified expert who has experience designing and carrying out field experiments that have improved equity and diversity in other large organizations.
- The CSS should be in charge of collecting, reviewing, and auditing diversity data and measuring the impact of policy interventions. The CSS could report on the demography of individuals serving in managerial and policy roles in contrast to support roles, for example. The CSS would collect demographic categories missing in the EEO MD-715 reports (ethnicity, gender identity, persons with invisible disabilities, and sexual orientation).
- The Secretary must ensure that the Office of the Legal Advisor (L) does not serve as a barrier to the lawful collection of data by voluntary self-identification, used in studies to contribute to achieving greater diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The President and Secretary should select appointees for the Department who have experience promoting data transparency to each of the seven major positions influencing diversity data transparency (D, D-MR, M, DG, L, CDIO, and S/OCR) and require these appointees to track improvements and backsliding on demographic diversity across all organizational units.
- L should assist the Chief Social Scientist with a written application to the EEOC for approval to collect broader categories of data for the purpose of improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (ethnicity, gender identity, invisible disabilities, and sexual orientation). Such data would be collected via voluntary self-identification and be anonymized consistent with EEOC regulations.
- The Secretary should order the immediate release of a more transparent format for all demographic appendices to Management Directive #715. They must be machine readable, and easy for independent researchers to analyze across years, organizational units, and demographic categories (such as .xlsx,.csv, rather than only PDF versions which is the current practice).

Legislators:
- The Senate should require political appointee nominees for the following positions D, D-MR, M, L, DG, OIG, S/OCR commit to increase diversity data transparency with specific commitments. These promises should be documented in writing in Questions for the Record.

19. The Department of State periodically hires management consulting firms at great expense. Such firms often have statistical modelling capabilities that the Department does not have, but could build internally with an in-house team.
20. One example of high-quality organizational field experiments that promote equitable outcomes is a study that successfully addressed performance bonus pay, serving as an example that the Department, when adopting similar scientific rigor, could apply social science tools to management practices. See: Castilla, Emilio. “Accounting for the Gap: A Firm Study Manipulating Organizational Accountability and Transparency in Pay Decisions.” Organization Science. 26(2). 2015.
21. The Office of the Legal Advisor often blocks data collection based on privacy grounds that have not been barriers in private sector efforts; collecting such data is critical to building diversity and inclusion management tools. See: Marsh, Victor. Twitter Post. January 17, 2021.
D. Creating Auditing and Accountability Mechanisms

Policymakers:

- The Chief Social Scientist should analyze current DG efforts on addressing barriers to entry and promotions and identify steps within the talent management pipeline where Foreign Service and Civil Service diversity is decreasing. Choosing one external expert in organizational field experiments to improve equitable recognition of diverse talent, the CSS and the independent expert should identify root causes of such trends and present them to the DG and CDIO.22

- To ensure that high-status work at the State Department is open to people with disabilities, the State Department should report publicly concrete data on persons with disabilities hired across all hiring authorities, across time. Learning which pay series and pay grades of jobs people with disabilities were hired to will help the Department improve the extent to which persons with disabilities have adequate pathways for promotion and professional growth.23

Legislators:

- In public confirmation hearings or questions for the record for Ambassadors and Assistant Secretary nominees, Senators should hold leaders accountable to their records on promoting diversity by consistently asking nominees a question for the record related to underrepresented groups, such as: “Has this post/bureau reached or exceeded the U.S. population parity for [insert underrepresented group] yet? And if not, why not? Please provide the most current demographic statistics for the number of candidates who bid, were interviewed, shortlisted, and selected for positions during the Foreign Service bidding process in your bureau and discuss how you will lead the bureau.”

22. The Department of State often could establish higher quality data collection through partnering with academia via the Chief Social Scientist. Tenured professors in quantitative sociology, for example, could partner with the Department to develop and publish research on research-backed methods to assess and improve all processes.

23. The federal government uses Schedule A hiring authorities to increase the number of persons with disabilities in its talent pool. However, schedule A is vastly underutilized at the State Department by hiring managers, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented in administrative functions or roles focused on disability issues, rather than core policy positions. This application of Schedule A has dissuaded qualified applicants at mid-career and senior-ranks applying for policy jobs due to a perceived disadvantage they may experience through using it in their job applications.
Making the State Department Worldwide Accessible to All

Sofija Korać, Former U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Office

As an immigrant from Serbia, I always dreamed of a career as a diplomat where I could proudly represent the United States. I studied international relations and applied to the Foreign Service my senior year of college. Despite passing both written and oral exams, I was deemed “not worldwide available” because I have a congenital physical disability.

While I use a wheelchair and crutches to get around, I do not have any medical issues that would preclude me from serving anywhere. I was told “our embassies aren’t all up to Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards and we wouldn’t be able to evacuate you.” Two weeks later this blow was made worse when I got the same excuse from the Peace Corps. Frustrated to be denied yet again, I went on to work for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Serbia.

I’m not one who gives up easily. So I tried for another opportunity to serve my country through a different hiring mechanism, the civil service. I was fortunate that my ideal job opened up to work on multilateral issues. When I asked for an accessible parking spot in the Main State Garage, a reasonable accommodation through the ADA, I received significant pushback. As someone with restricted mobility, I needed the ability to commute by car. For me, this was a wake-up call that even federal government colleagues didn’t fully understand that “reasonable accommodation” is a right enshrined in the ADA and specific to the individual.

Three years ago when I accepted a job at the US Mission to the UN, I asked about assistance with finding housing as a reasonable accommodation due to the limited nature of accessible apartments in New York City. I even did my homework researching the ADA and related legislation before making my request. The response I received was yet again “we’ve never done that before.” I replied: “Every type of accommodation has a first.” The person ignored my request and lectured me that I should feel grateful for being even given the opportunity.

Thankfully, I’ve also had some positive successes along the way. After a work trip to Geneva, the then Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) approached me during my first week to ask about the accessibility of the Palais des Nations and even more importantly, the U.S. Mission. Despite being in a developed country, our Mission had a long way to go on accessibility. He asked me to write a memo outlining the accessibility issues at Mission Geneva. Within a week of my return to Washington, the DCM had issued work orders to fix all the issues and within six months all the improvements were made.

I’m proud of the successes we are starting to make. But we have a long way to go. As I rise in the ranks of the civil service, I am the only one among my peers. This is also true at the UN. I am the only wheelchair user diplomat in New York and Geneva in the ten years I’ve served. While the Department has a hiring process (Schedule A) for hiring persons with disabilities, most hires are relegated to purely administrative roles, or as policy officers only working on disability rights.

Like other underrepresented groups, persons with disabilities are an untapped asset. Rather than create barriers for entry, we need to smooth pathways for both joining and progressing to all levels of the Department. Our foreign policy will be better for it.
We envision a State Department talent pipeline that looks like America where talent sourcing is strategic, pay is equitable for all, and structural barriers to entry for underrepresented groups are continuously addressed.

A. Sourcing Talent

Policymakers:

- The State Department’s Chief Social Scientist and Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer should appoint an independent academic expert to perform a “diversity review” of all its processes—from hiring to assignments, and promotion and retention.

- The State Department should provide universal paid internships and expand hiring qualifications to include any candidate who demonstrates a willingness to learn, work hard, and has a passion for foreign affairs, whether that is self-taught, through volunteer service, or through another form of education.

- The State Department should hire additional full-time professional recruiters (beyond the six recruiter positions currently serving the entire agency) to systematically and equitably source candidates from diverse educational backgrounds who might not yet have considered a career in foreign policy. These full-time recruiters should proactively include people with disabilities, among other underrepresented groups, in outreach efforts.

- The State Department should broaden the existing range of fellowship programs to recruit for diverse talent (see Pillar 3 for additional detail).

Legislators:

- The heads of hiring for Civil and Foreign Service (i.e. the DG) should annually report to Congress on a voluntary basis providing an overview of the changes they have implemented from the initial diversity review for a period of five fiscal years after the publication of the review.

- The State Department should make publicly available to Congress the findings of its most recent external evaluation of the Foreign Service recruitment and exam processes to expand transparency and dialogue around whether the process suitably supports the Department in addressing 21st Century challenges.  

- Congress should appropriate more funds and authorize higher standards to improve GTM recruiter outcomes to include hiring full-time professional recruiters to systematically and equitably source candidates from diverse backgrounds.

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24 The reported, but unreleased McKinsey & Company study is not publicly available, but has been referred to by the Department and AFSA. See: Chacon, Arnold and Alex Karagiannis. “Building a Foreign Service for 2025 and Beyond.” The Foreign Service Journal. May 2015.
C. Removing Barriers to Entry

Policymakers:

- The State Department’s Chief Social Scientist and Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer should appoint an independent academic expert to perform a “diversity review” of all its processes—from hiring to assignments, promotion, and retention.25

- Develop fair and expeditious security clearance processes and suitability reviews, including by a CSS-led “diversity review” of the security clearance and medical clearance processes to investigate whether data support claims of bias. The security clearance report should include how long security clearance adjudications took (anonymized), disaggregated by demographic data, and identify root causes for why the Diplomatic Security Bureau has not, since 2017, implemented timely reforms.26

- The Secretary should issue guidance prohibiting headquarters staff and overseas posts from using worldwide availability as an excuse to avoid making institutional changes to comply with the ADA. This would include ensuring the medical clearance process does not deny persons with disabilities “worldwide available status” due to the Department’s own inadequacies in upgrading physical accessibility of American posts.

- Diplomatic Security should coordinate with the security clearance authorities in the intelligence community and the Defense Department to establish consistent protocols to vet for ties to White nationalism and other domestic extremist groups in security clearance processes.

- Deny security clearances to candidates who have demonstrated public support, in person or online, for White supremacy or other events or conduct deemed unlawful by a court, including sedition.

- Diplomatic Security should establish an adequately staffed team that is dedicated to expediting security clearances for interns, Pathways, Pickering, Presidential Management, Rangel, and other fellowship program participants.

- The State Department should allow for both interim and full security clearances for interns, revising its current policy of issuing only interim clearances that are only valid during the internship period.

- The Secretary should issue a directive that GTM more systematically work with hiring managers across the Department and job series in order to recruit and hire more qualified persons with disabilities, including to more consistently utilize the Schedule A hiring authority to all job levels with a particular focus on senior-level and policy jobs. Many persons with disabilities will use Schedule A so the targeted recruitment at all levels should also especially focus on other hiring processes for Foreign and Civil Service. More education also needs to be done for recruiters and applicants about the benefits of Schedule A and dispelling misconceptions that it can disadvantage recruiters and applicants.

- The DG should appoint a team of GTM specialists to manage job applicants where applicants self identify as having a disability or request reasonable accommodations once offered a position. This team should liaise with the HR bureau handling the hiring for each position and the Bureau of Medical Services and/or DRAD only as needed in order to ensure proper evaluation and consideration of each applicant’s unique considerations. MED should not be automatically involved in applications for persons with disabilities unless they also have a medical condition. MED should not determine eligibility for worldwide availability.

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25. The review should include past changes to HR procedures to measure their end results over time, including: the addition of the qualifications evaluation panels in 1999; the addition of EEO principles into the Foreign Service entrance exam; the creation and subsequent discontinuation of various Department-wide mentorship initiatives, etc.

Legislators:

- Congress should require DS to complete security clearance investigations within six months, require a waiver from the Assistant Secretary for DS for any investigation that exceeds this period and annually report to Congress how many investigations did not meet this timeline.
- Congress should require DS to report annually for five years on changes made as a result of the initial diversity review.
- Congress should appropriate funding to hire additional full-time civil servants, not contractors, to the Office of Personnel Security and Suitability.
- Congress should mandate an annual report on the recruitment of persons with disabilities by job series, to evaluate and overcome current trends of hiring the vast majority of persons with disabilities to low-level positions.

D. Addressing Pay Equity

Policymakers:

- The State Department should publicize information about the Superior Qualifications Authority (SQA) and all other related rules and processes for making compensation decisions beyond Step 1 of each pay grade when extending formal job offers.27
- The State Department should update the FAM to illustrate the full policy and process for making SQA determinations, as well as other compensation decisions for which they have authority.

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27. The State Department does not ensure equal pay for equal work at present—even in visa officer job functions that are substantially standardized. The root cause is one aspect of defining worker pay, Superior Qualifications Authority and other discretionary tools, whose application should extend only to matches of the superior skills to job assignments that deploy that superior skill. To pay a stock broker more to perform a visa adjudication job than a former grade school teacher is not in keeping with equal pay for equal work.
How a Toxic Ecosystem Led to an Exodus of Diverse Talent

Michael Veasy, Former U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer, currently Senior Advisor for Diplomatic Fellowships, Howard University

I joined the Foreign Service to become a consular officer largely because the Consular Affairs (CA) Bureau was known for championing diversity and inclusion. Former CA Assistant Secretaries Mary Ryan and Maura Harty developed a vision for leadership, management, and building cohesive teams that welcomed diverse people and perspectives. And I flourished in this environment. I was promoted twice in my first year of promotion eligibility and when I reached FO-01, I ranked 6th in the world for all Consular Officers reviewed that year.

By the time I was asked to serve as Chief of the Consular Section in Tijuana, a Senior Foreign Service-level position at one of our busiest consular posts, Maura Harty had retired. I noticed under new leadership, efforts to promote diversity within the Bureau shifted dramatically. The numbers of people of color assigned to top consular positions, particularly Black Americans, began to drop significantly. There were few other senior officers who looked like me.

My predecessor in Tijuana became the Bureau’s Deputy Executive Director. In this new role, she made it clear that, although she knew very little about me, she was vehemently against the decision to assign me to such an important job. From Washington, she allowed (and sometimes asked) my staff to report directly to her about how I was managing the operation. Those staff members understood that she was looking for issues to prove I did not deserve the position.

I soon found myself isolated to the point that the Consular Affairs Bureau stopped sharing information with me that I needed for my job. My supervisor was so concerned that I might take action against the Bureau that he asked me directly if I planned to file an EEO complaint. Despite the lack of support, my section was one of the highest performing in Mexico. By every metric, we were adjudicating more cases per officer than any other post. We were so efficient that we volunteered our staff to other posts in need, and we took over country-wide responsibilities for vehicle recovery issues and crisis management. I even earned a Superior Honor Award.

For me, the damage had already been done. The hardship I faced not only impacted my career, but had a ripple effect. Two other Black officers I supervised in Tijuana left the Department after witnessing what happened to me. Rather than stay in this toxic environment,

I exercised a rarely used clause of the Foreign Service Act to retire early without reaching the mandatory retirement age. I prematurely opened my window for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. I then immediately took an irreversible action to close my window, which meant that I had to formally request that the senior threshold promotion panel not consider me for promotion. This is a rare move. Yet at no point did the Director General or Bureau leadership ask why I wanted to leave. I wasn’t even given an exit interview. I left the Foreign Service with the feeling that the Department didn’t care.

Although I was lucky to have mentors and colleagues like U.S. Ambassador to the UN-designate Linda Thomas Greenfield, Ambassador Natalie Brown, Ambassador Don Yamamoto, and former Deputy Assistant Secretary Makila James who provided support along the way, I found these leaders were the exception, not the norm. The system is broken. This is why attrition, especially among officers of color, is so high. As long as the State Department creates roadblocks for non-white officers to rise through the ranks, the exodus of Foreign Service Officers of color will continue.
2.3 - Promoting Greater Fairness in Promotions and Assignments Processes

We envision a State Department where every employee feels they have equitable access to rise up through the ranks with promotion, assignments, and award processes that are transparent and merit-based. The American people can trust these processes if and only if independent experts audit and verify them as equitable.

A. Promoting Transparency and Equity in the Promotions Process

Policymakers:

- Address Foreign Service inequities that privilege policy over management and other functions by implementing the following concurrent interventions: (1) Eliminate conal designations for all Foreign Service assignments and promotion panels. The current system which only allows for promotion within cone reinforces silos, creates disincentives for reporting officers from doing management work (and vice versa), and penalizes employees who have taken non-traditional assignments designed to broaden their skillsets—effectively discouraging the type of innovation we want to see. (2) Incentivize officers to broaden their skills and take assignments that “give back to the institution,” especially as they approach the senior ranks. Require employees to complete at least one of a designated list tours in order to advance to the Senior Foreign Service. These could include service in GTM (Career Development and Assignments, FSI, Diplomats in Residence, and Board of Examiners) or assignments serving as a bureau D&I advisor. (3) Require employees to complete at least one non-traditional assignment outside of the Department to advance to the Senior Foreign Service to include fellowships/detail assignments to the Hill, think tanks, universities, municipal offices, private sector exchanges; or multilateral assignments at an international organization.

- To help understand and resolve barriers to advancement, the Office of the Chief Social Scientist (CSS) should choose one external organizational scientist to serve as an external auditor. The independent expert should conduct a 2021 “diversity review” of Department processes—from talent search, examination, hiring, security clearances, assignments, promotion, and performance award processes. The CSS will follow-up to collect data and measure results from changes the CDIO prioritizes in the implementation phase of “diversity review” recommendations.

- Standardize Foreign Service promotions based on a collective, updated set of precepts, using no more than five precepts to ensure evaluation standards are clear and realistic. This should be done in consultation with the Chief Social Scientist and verify the Department of State’s approach with tenured, independent academic experts in quantitative organizational sociology and psychology.

- Building off current DG efforts to pilot gender-blind procedures for awarding performance payments (i.e. for meritorious service increases for the Foreign Service), the State Department should pilot blind employee performance evaluations for all categories of personnel relying on the advice of external academic experts to design this pilot professionally.

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28. For the purposes of this report, independent experts are experts that are not paid by the Department of State. Tenured faculty are often willing to give advice on a gratuitous services basis, without the high fees paid to consulting companies, and with more independence than consulting companies.


• The Secretary should appoint one academic expert in organizational inequality with a track record of applied research experiments that improve organizations’ fairness to lead a “diversity review” of all processes for Foreign Service promotion decisions.32 The Chief Social Scientist should use computer-assisted textual analysis techniques to analyze patterns in identity-relevant (especially gender) language in the anonymized text of Employee Evaluation Reports.

• The State Department should publicize internally promotion committees members for senior assignments (i.e. for the “D” committee and the DCM/Principal Officer Committee) and overall demographic make-up of each selection and senior assignments panel.

• Those who are eligible but not promoted in a given year should receive 24-hours notice via email from GTM before the list is published so that they have time to absorb the news privately. These changes would improve morale and mitigate the sting associated with the publication of promotion lists.

• Require Foreign and Civil Service promotion panel composition to be at least 30% individuals from historically underrepresented groups and 50% women.

• Change the name of the EEO award to “Diversity and Inclusion” Award and ensure there is no minimum number of applicants required to receive the award.

• Ensure that guidelines and criteria of award committees commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion principles when evaluating and awarding candidates.

Legislators:
• Congress should require disclosure of longitudinal Foreign Service promotion rates (i.e. years to reach each rank from the start of employment rather than merely publishing time within class/rank for promotion), including comparisons between race, ethnicity, sex, and across time. This would allow adequate comparison of the total time to rise through the ranks for various demographic groups and help achieve merit selection, in which employee performance (not employee identity) is the primary predictor of promotion speed. The format for each report should prioritize ease of analysis and be machine readable (such as .xlsx, .csv).

B. Promoting Transparency and Equity in the Assignments Process

Policymakers:
• Each Bureau must report to the CDIO and GTM on the demography of its Foreign Service bidding population after each assignment cycle. The report should include demographic statistics on who bid, who was interviewed, who was placed on a shortlist for each position, and who received the final offer. Data collection via voluntary self-identification should include at least: disabilities, gender identity, ethnicity and race, and sexual orientation. The Department should make such data available internally to its workforce. Consistent with EEOC guidance, the purpose of this anonymized data collection is to advance diversity and inclusion at every bureau.31

• The Chief Social Scientist should analyze the data reported to the CDIO and GTM data. These analyses must include, at least, event-history models (aka “hazard models”) to measure the impact of any D&I effort on the odds of hiring, retaining, including, and promoting employees over time per bureau, especially employees from underrepresented groups.

• The Chief Social Scientist should use computer-assisted textual analysis techniques to analyze patterns in identity-relevant (especially gendered) language in the anonymized text of Bureau 360-degree reports and Employee Evaluation Reports (EERs), both of which are used to evaluate FSOs, and advertise findings annually to employees through an easily accessible medium.

• Prepare a single internal platform for advertising jobs and assignments across the Department and missions among civil servants, detail positions, and Foreign Service jobs to increase transparency of opportunities for all staff.

• Ensure all 360 reference forms are housed on a common, internal platform. The 360 review process is currently different for various bureaus.

• The CDIO should sign-off on all Office Director assignments, with a view towards ensuring substantially wider diversity in terms of racial, gender, and disabilities for these key positions, which serve as a springboard to senior leadership.

Legislators:
• Mandating the use of existing longitudinal data on all persons paneled to all Foreign Service jobs since the 1970s (the “GEMS” database), Congress should require reports on each organizational unit’s demography by race, by ethnicity, by sex, across time. The units of organization shall include all offices within each Bureau and all sections within each Embassy. The report should include this demography in annual samples from the month of March, which is before the summer rotation season and after the winter rotation season. The format for each report should prioritize ease of analysis (such as .xlsx, .csv,) rather than the current PDF-only format.
The Security Clearance Process Hurts Diverse Candidates

Anonymous Contributor

I am a child of Chinese immigrants. When I applied to the Pickering Fellowship, I thought that its existence meant that the State Department valued diversity. However, I soon found out that the Security Clearance process penalized my diversity. It took over three years to receive my security clearance. During that process, the Pickering program suspended me from the program, resulting in my not being able to receive the funding that was part of the contract I had signed with the Pickering program. Had I not ultimately received my security clearance, the Pickering program told me I would have had to pay back the fellowship, which would have bankrupted my family. It also meant that I would not have been able to serve as a Foreign Service Officer, which was my dream, and why I had applied to the Pickering Fellowship in the first place.

I felt incredibly demoralized and exhausted after each setback, which burdened me with the costs, time, and logistics of figuring out how I could make up for the lost funding while continuing my education and holding up my end of the contract that I'd signed with the Pickering program. I reached out to over 100 people — including current and former Ambassadors, Diplomatic Security personnel, and my Congressional representatives — to help expedite my security clearance, to no avail. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security told me that only the U.S. President could expedite my clearance. I called every week to check on its status. I had to get fingerprinted 7 times because they were “unreadable” and pay for each one of them. I had to pay back my summer stipend as a Pickering intern, after I had already paid for my summer housing in DC. I had to pay out of pocket for a semester at a top-tier and expensive Master’s degree program and work multiple jobs to make up for the lost funding I had expected the Pickering program to cover.

When I finally received my clearance, I talked to many people at State to make sure that what happened to me didn’t happen to anyone else. What I found was empty sympathy and no will to make serious changes except for two passionate people in the American Foreign Service Association and the Asian American Foreign Affairs Association, who explained that anything perceived as “rocking the boat” at the Department would mean individual “career suicide,” explaining the silence of so many of our colleagues. HR colleagues hid behind the “lack of data” excuse. When employees are afraid to speak up for fear of “career suicide” and the Department doesn’t collect and share the right data in the first place, it’s easy to dismiss the problem and consider stories like mine as one-off anecdotes.

But they’re not. The security clearance process penalizes diverse candidates, including first-generation and second-generation Americans, and there are many more stories like mine, as reflected in the Washington’s Post’s September 2013 article, “At the State Department, diversity can count against you.” While it hurts when foreigners don’t perceive me as American, it hurts even more when fellow Americans don’t perceive me as American.

The Department’s rhetoric about valuing diversity is undermined by its actions that penalize that very diversity. I applied to the Pickering Fellowship because I wanted to serve my country and because it would allow me to complete my education that would train me for a career in U.S. diplomacy without going into debt. Or so I had thought. Had I known there would have been a risk of bankruptcy due to a security clearance process that would penalize the very aspects of my identity that the Pickering Fellowship sought, I would never have applied. If the State Department truly wants to build a diverse workforce, it needs to fix this structural bias in the security clearance process that disproportionately penalizes diverse candidates.
2.4 - Cultivating and Retaining Diverse Talent

We envision a State Department where employees are highly motivated to show up, feel supported, have access to the tools needed to excel at their jobs, and mentors who help them grow personally and professionally.

A. Providing Tools for Success

**Policymakers:**
- Mandate by Executive Order that diversity-promotion efforts be evidence-based and tracked over time; anchor all interventions in data with a commitment to do no harm.\(^{33}\)
- The State Department should redesign Foreign Service basic training as part-time, long-duration, on-the-job training programs. This would mix classroom learning from State Department officials with time doing entry-level work at multiple State Department offices. During time in office, entry-level officers would deepen exposure to diverse workplace situations and during time in the classroom, senior- and mid-level officers would in turn provide feedback on ways to address workplace matters.
- FSI should expand the mandatory Civil Service Orientation to incorporate scenario-based training and applied leadership principles, including curricula relevant to each job series that apply training goals to dedicated contexts. Incorporate leadership training into a phased orientation curricula to ensure opportunities to absorb content and apply to real-world work.
- Expand and nurture the Civil Service mentorship program to advise Civil Service Officers at all levels and work with them to leverage their skills at higher levels to compete for the unfortunately rare leadership opportunities at the GS-14 level and above.
- Overseas, all manager communications about an employee to Washington should be shared with the employee. Research shows no benefit of secret feedback benefiting employee development.

B. Investing in Mentorship and Inclusive Leadership Programs

- The Department should innovate iteratively improving the mentorship process over time based on input from participants and undertake evaluations from mentoring innovations and pilot programs.\(^{34}\)
- Train volunteer mentors and sponsors to optimize the delivery of resources to their mentees.
- The CSS should launch data collection efforts comparing various discontinued mentorship matching approaches for their effects on diversity over time across the Department’s own history to contribute to improved outcomes for the Department.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{33}\) Research demonstrates that mandatory unconscious bias training can have harmful results, including organization-wide backlash that harms promotions for Asian women, Asian men, and Black women. See: Dobbin, Frank and Kalev, Alexandra. 2016. “Why Diversity Programs Fail and What Works Better.” *Harvard Business Review*, 94(7-8). \(^{34}\) In 2018, the Department launched the iMentor Program to centralize the mentoring application process across Civil and Foreign Service, in addition to several additional mentorship innovations or pilots. In a 2019 report, the Department claimed that it “matched 95%” of all employees to mentors, yet very limited resources exist for the only formalized mentoring program. See: Department of State Bureau of Human Resources. “Five Year Workforce and Leadership Succession Plan 2018-2022.” 2018. \(^{35}\) Formal mentorship programs, on average, are an underrated but proven approach to improve managerial diversity outcomes over time. See: Dobbin, Frank and Kalev, Alexandra. “Why Diversity Programs Fail.” *Harvard Business Review. July-August* 2016.
• The State Department should fund annually a year-long intensive, mid-level leadership seminar designed specifically to help employees from historically underrepresented groups advance through the mid-ranks and into the Senior Executive and Senior Foreign Services. This program should meet bi-monthly and focus on building supervisory skills, career mapping and effective bidding, and should pair participants with senior sponsors who are committed to participants’ long-term career advancement and helping them secure key assignments commensurate with their performance.

• Increase staff capacity for the Office of Continuity Counseling to support and counsel employees from underrepresented groups at every stage of progression in their careers.

• Invest in the mid-level retention of Pickering and Rangel Fellows by providing a formalized, targeted mentoring and coaching program within the Department and establishing a Department-sponsored annual conference for employees who entered as fellows to foster a stronger sense of inclusion and community, provide career advice, and assist them to navigate workplace challenges.

Legislators:
• Congress should undertake routine oversight related to the Department’s implementation of commitments related to evidence-based management practices, including acknowledging the potential negative impact in private-sector studies of mandatory diversity training on underrepresented groups. 36

36. See footnote 33.
In 2017 and 2018, I was on a temporary tour of duty (TDY) to the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) in Blackstone, Virginia on Fort Pickett. In 2017, I was there at the same time as the events in Charlottesville that resulted in white supremacists driving a car into a protester named Heather Heyer, ultimately killing her. Speaking after the events, President Trump said that there were “fine people on both sides.” As an African-American working at the U.S. Department of State, I found this rhetoric to be tone-deaf and ignorant when only one side was preaching hate and had actually killed someone.

Charlottesville is less than 100 miles from Blackstone When you are on TDY to FASTC, you typically stay near Richmond. Blackstone does not have any reliable lodging options (or at least it did not when I was going back and forth) so there is approximately an hour commute each way to and from Richmond. During the drive between Richmond and Blackstone, I saw some of the biggest Confederate flags imaginable displayed in front of houses and on people’s property. A good part of the drive takes place on the only main road leading to Fort Pickett, without any light posts. I am sure many other Department personnel had seen these flags. In 2018, I was on TDY during Daylight Saving Time, and the drive could be in the dark both ways. The Confederacy was never part of the U.S. and its legacy is dangerous for everyone, but especially for African-Americans. If they had their way, I would still be an enslaved person.

I raised the notion of passing these Confederate flags every day on my commute to a military base named after a Confederate general, with my direct supervisor, a woman of European descent. There was not any acknowledgement that I should be worried and was told that my other colleagues, who happened to not share my skin color, did not have any issues on their TDYs. This response represents how the U.S. Department of State, across all bureaus and offices, habitually ignores issues within its own history concerning democracy, human rights, racism, discrimination, and security while simultaneously condemning other nations on the very same issues.

The fact that I was working on international security issues during this TDY while there were clear and present domestic security issues close to me is sadly ironic and dysfunctional. If something were to happen to me or any other person working in areas where residences proudly displayed Confederate flags, what would be the response from the Department? Where is the alert in the SAFE program for Confederate flag locations? What is being done to make sure that all who work for the Department can do so under safe and secure circumstances?

At a time where white insurrectionists stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 parading the Confederate flag through the building and 12 U.S. Army National Guard members were removed from inauguration duties due to right-wing militia ties, these issues could not be more relevant. You can read about the experiences of Tianna Spears, former FSO, who endured discriminatory treatment at the U.S-Mexico border at the hands of US border officials. These are not isolated incidents but daily ones. The Department does not have the personnel, ethos, or resources to appropriately support its workers on these issues and it must address this domestically in the same manner that it does abroad.
Pillar 3

Broadening Diplomatic Engagement Across America

3.1 - Increasing Linkages to States and Cities, Innovation Hubs, and Capitol Hill
3.2 - Making the Case for Why Diplomacy Matters to the American Public
3.3 - Expanding the Diplomatic Toolkit to Engage Diverse Audiences

Introduction

Beyond foreign policy circles in large metropolitan areas, knowledge of diplomacy and U.S. civilian efforts to cooperate with allies around the world on an increasingly complex, global agenda is sorely lacking. The State Department can and must do a better job of making the case for why diplomacy matters in advancing national security and delivering peace and prosperity to the American people.

Existing diplomatic engagement programs, while beneficial, are under resourced and limited in reach. Without a tailored outreach strategy spanning the U.S. and its territories, we cannot expect our recruitment efforts to succeed in bringing in the best, brightest, and most diverse candidates. We also cannot expect the U.S. populace to support increasing resources for a Department they do not understand. Therefore, we view engaging the American public on foreign policy and the work of the Department as a necessary component of a 21st century transformation of the State Department.
We envision a State Department that actively seeks to partner with diverse stakeholders across the country. This means increasing our footprint with innovation hubs, legislators on Capitol Hill, and mayors and governors.

A. Establishing an Office of State and Local Diplomacy

Policymakers:

- The State Department should establish an Office of State and Local Diplomacy (OSLD) that is led by an Ambassador-at-Large for State and Local Diplomacy and housed in the Secretary’s Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP). The OSLD would serve as the connective tissue between state and local officials, Americans across urban and rural communities, and U.S. foreign policy. Mayors and governors are first responders to national security priorities like climate change, countering extremism, trade and investment, and COVID-19 pandemic recovery and response. State and local actors often have the flexibility to launch innovative pilots that, if proven successful, can be scaled to other cities and influence federal policy.

- The OSLD will serve as a resource for Civil and Foreign Service officers who want to link state and local actors overseas to domestic counterparts. U.S. foreign policy is often constrained to bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. Expanding the diplomatic toolbox to include state and local diplomacy adds an untapped dimension to U.S. foreign policy.

- The OSLD will be the principal advisor to the Secretary on state and local diplomacy and represent the Department in trans-city and state networks, including but not limited to: the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, Global Parliament of Mayors, U20, US Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, National Governors Association, and the Strong Cities Network.

- The State Department should expand the existing Pearson program to place fellows in all 50 state capitols. These OSLD Pearson Fellows will be embedded in the international affairs offices of state and local actors and will help align State Department priorities with state and local foreign policy goals. OSLD Pearson fellows will also engage with nonprofits, universities, tribes and local stakeholders in public diplomacy engagements to diversify recruitment, help explain U.S. foreign policy to local audiences, and assist any existing international collaborations.

Legislators:

- Reintroduce and pass the City and State Diplomacy Act (originally HR 3571 in the 116th Congress) that would establish an Office of State and Local Diplomacy (Subnational Diplomacy Office).

- Congress should appropriate State Department funding to allow for up to 60 OSLD Pearson Fellows and equivalent Civil Service roles across every state and among territories and tribes.
B. Creating an Office of Innovation Diplomacy

**Policymakers:**
- The State Department should establish an Office of Innovation Diplomacy (OID) that is led by an Ambassador-at-Large for Innovation Diplomacy and housed in the Secretary’s Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP).
- The OID will advise the Secretary of State on global technology policy and social innovation in coordination with relevant bureaus across the Department. The OID will serve as a liaison between the State Department and innovation hubs across the country and be a resource for State Department posts and bureaus looking to connect overseas visitors to technology counterparts in innovation hubs across the country.
- The OID will engage in outreach to the private sector, universities focused on technology and cybersecurity, and other relevant institutions to diversify outreach for candidates interested in joining federal service.
- Create an Entrepreneur in Residence Program (EIR) to bring interested technology and data talent to the State Department for a period of one year.
- Pilot the creation of a State Advanced Research Projects Agency (SARPA), a small-scale version modeled after Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), to develop new ideas and programs through partnerships with innovation hubs, private companies, universities, and other entities who can provide value to the mission.

**Legislators:**
- Congress should authorize an Office of Innovation Diplomacy through appropriations to the Department of State, including necessary organizational changes, funding, and staffing.

C. Expanding State Department Engagement with Capitol Hill

**Policymakers:**
- In hiring personnel for H, the Department should prioritize FTE positions, at all levels, to be filled by individuals from the private and nonprofit sectors with extensive expertise in legislative relations as well as other Executive Branch agencies to embed existing best practices within the Department.
- The State Department should assign and/or hire at least four Civil Service and Foreign Service Officers to work full-time in H’s House and Senate Liaison Offices and engage the four committees of jurisdiction (HACFO, SACFO, SFRC, and HFAC) to maintain a constant presence on the Hill. The goal of this presence is to create and maintain solid relationships with Congressional stakeholders beyond mere logistical support for hearings and briefings. Fellows, and interns can also support the Liaison Offices.
- The State Department should explore more proactive engagement opportunities with Congress (e.g. quarterly or monthly events) to educate staff and members about high-profile foreign policy events, passports and visas, casework pertaining to Americans abroad, and specific issues related to each state and congressional district.
- The State Department should expand Civil Service Congressional fellowship opportunities and ensure that Civil Service fellows bring their legislative experiences back to the Department with a six-month rotation to H, its liaison offices, or in a Congressional advisor role within any regional or functional bureau. This will promote a wider and deeper bench of employees who understand Congress and the legislative process.
- The State Department should expand the Pearson Fellowship to include employees starting at the GS-11/FS-04 level to ensure that employees are provided earlier exposure to Congress.
• Just as Department officials travel jointly with UN entities and foreign donors, bipartisan Members of Congress and senior Department officials should schedule overseas travel together, which would foster informal relationships and contribute to a shared understanding of issues impacting foreign policy priorities.

• In partnership with P, H should develop a strategy outlining areas for improving relationships and information sharing with Congress on both regional and thematic issues.

• Expand training for all Foreign Service Officer cones and Civil Service Foreign Affairs series staff in Civil Service orientation, A-100, and Washington Tradecraft, to include in-depth and scenario-based curricula on the role of Congress in foreign policy and appropriations, as well as Congress’s unique culture and Constitutional mandates, with the goal of fostering respect for, not managing, Congress.

• Offer a briefing on the State Department mission and career opportunities three times per year for Capitol Hill interns (i.e. for each cohort of Capitol Hill interns: spring, summer, and fall) to enhance recruitment efforts.

Legislators:

• Congress should approve an expansion of H’s footprint on Capitol Hill including necessary organizational changes, funding, and staffing, including House and Senate Liaison offices with at least two FTEs per office.

• Members of Congress, particularly Committee Chairs and Ranking Members, should prioritize in-person meetings with high-priority participants in the Department’s exchange programs who visit Washington or their local districts.

37. State Department exchange and people to people programs bring impressive global leaders to the United States in order to educate Americans and build participants’ leadership and technical skills, yet Members of Congress routinely cancel meetings or defer to staff-level interactions with such guests. This forecloses opportunities to hear from foreign experts to build informed policy and precludes opportunities to build long-term trust and partnership with foreign guests who often share U.S. values and have influence in their home countries.
East Meets Tech: Connecting the Innovation Hubs of Austin and Lahore

Maryum Saifee, U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer

When I arrived as the Deputy Public Affairs Chief in Lahore, I knew it would be a tough tour. I remember on the plane ride to Lahore, I met a Pakistani-American from Chicago who asked where I was headed (I’m of South Asian descent so he assumed I was also visiting family) and I said I was moving for work and would be serving as spokesperson for the U.S. consulate. He shook his head and gave me this look of pity: “Are you sure? I believe the Consulate shut down years ago.”

Our mandate was to promote shared prosperity and people to people ties. Yet we could barely leave the compound. Having served in Baghdad, Erbil, and Cairo during the 2011 uprising, I was used to life under lockdown. But Lahore was different. This was not a well-resourced mega-embassy. We had a very small team with limited bandwidth. I posted religiously on social media more as “proof of life” given how many Pakistanis I discovered, including the guy on the plane, didn’t even realize we were open.

The limitations ended up forcing me to think more creatively. When I served in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs five years ago, our office pitched the idea of expanding the diplomatic toolbox to include subnational diplomacy. The urgency was grounded in the leadup to the Paris climate negotiations where cities were already forming multilateral groupings like the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. The effort never really took root, despite many valiant attempts in the building to seed it.

When I arrived in Lahore, one of the grants I managed happened to be a subnational one. It linked the cities of Austin and Lahore around tech and innovation. The ATX+PAK Entrepreneurship Program was a multi-year, two-way exchange sending Punjabi and Texan startup founders, venture capitalists, and accelerators to meet one another and cross-fertilize ideas. About a third of the Texan participants were Pakistani diaspora who felt a personal connection to Lahore, but lacked the networks to navigate the ecosystem. And given the regional instability and political unrest in Pakistan, Lahore wasn’t exactly a first choice destination for these Texan investors.

The program was in part successful because of the scope—the city level is granular with more room for connectivity and experimentation. Another reason was chemistry. Both cities are foodie capitals and cultural meccas so that helped in forging a unique bond. The effort not only resulted in new investor dollars, but the venture capitalists from Texas helped socialize to their Pakistani counterparts how investing in tech startups (rather than their traditionally non-tech comfort zones) can create jobs and turn a profit. A highlight of my tour was when the Lahoris visited SXSW in Austin and decided to replicate their own version, the Mix Festival, to showcase tech startups across industries—from food delivery and music streaming apps to education technology, and even a virtual reality installation rendering cultural heritage sites in harder to reach tourist destinations in northwest Pakistan.

The program was so successful, we scaled the effort with a pilot between the cities of Detroit and Lahore. If the State Department were to create an Office of Innovation Diplomacy that engages with tech and innovation hubs across the country and matches with like-minded cities overseas, we can start formalizing this model, building subnational partnerships that can trickle up and lead to stronger, more durable bilateral ties.
3.2 - Making the Case for Why Diplomacy Matters to the American Public

We envision a State Department that works with the entertainment industry and encourages employees to visit their hometowns and tell the story of why diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy matter.

A. Establishing an Office of Entertainment Diplomacy

Policymakers:

- The State Department should establish an Office of Entertainment Diplomacy (OED) to focus on building relationships with the entertainment industry and creating a better public understanding of the importance of the work of the Department.38
- The OED could be located within the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R). Once established, the OED would: (a) advise and brief studios, screenwriters, and producers who request insight into how the Department functions and pitch narratives to bring to life; (b) engage unscripted projects, such as documentaries, talk shows, and game shows; (c) develop relationships with Hollywood; and (d) engage with content creators in new digital media streams (e.g. gaming, virtual reality) to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Legislators:

- Congress should authorize the establishment of the OED, including any necessary organizational changes, funding, and staffing.

B. Expanding Diplomatic Outreach Programs across the Country

Policymakers:

- Establish an alumni network of former State Department employees interested and available to act as liaisons for the Department in different industries and communities across the country.
- Facilitate remote visits and events for the Diplomat in Residence (DIR) program, exploring new avenues to connect with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) and community colleges within larger regions to ensure maximum outreach.
- Create clear standard operating procedures for employees to participate in the Hometown Diplomat program,39 and encourage employees to connect virtually with their hometown community.
- Update and expand the Department’s “State by State” map that identifies Department initiatives and programs impacting each state, in order to expand Americans’ awareness of how the Department’s work impacts their states and give DIRs, Hometown Diplomats, and Americans in overseas programs the tools they need to be effective. Introduce infographics and other visual representations to make this information more easily digestible for the general public.

38. Although there have been fairly recent fictional portrayals of the Department in mainstream media, such as the Secretary of State’s appearing in the 2016 Marvel film “Captain America: Civil War” and CBS’s 2014-2019 TV Series, “Madame Secretary,” these occurrences rarely provide exposure to the depth and breadth of the Department and the role of diplomacy in Americans’ lives. In order for the story of diplomats and foreign affairs to be depicted truthfully and positively, and to inspire and recruit new talent, diplomats need to play a role in shaping that story, in line with First Amendment limitations, and modeled on similar liaison offices among Department of Defense service branches.

39. The Hometown Diplomat program brings Department Foreign and Civil Service personnel to their home communities to share the State Department mission and highlight its relevance in Americans’ lives. Participants engage with their hometown’s local organizations, schools, government officials and local media. See: State Department.
• Expand resources to engage the significant network of American alumni, volunteers, organizations, and host families that engage with Department-funded programs in order to enhance opportunities for alumni, educate them on Department activities, and foster them as champions for diplomacy in their communities.

• Enhance the training and resources available to employees seeking to utilize the Hometown Diplomat program, both prior to their travel and while they are traveling to U.S. communities. Provide employees with a set package of information and Department swag to distribute.

• Form multidimensional institutional partnerships with educational entities beyond the Diplomat in Residence (DIR) program, focused on curriculum development for international affairs coursework, engaging in relevant student organizations and student life, and creating formalized recruitment pathways, particularly at HBCUs and community colleges.

• Establish dedicated partnerships with existing entities that connect communities and/or deliver foreign exchange opportunities to young Americans, e.g., the American Field Service, Rotary, and Sister Cities. Through such relationships, the Department can directly and indirectly reach the alumni of such programs and partner with organizations to serve as surrogate educators about the role of diplomacy and its impact on Americans at the local level.

• Add an outreach requirement to the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. In the second half of the program year, Fulbright student grantees, with the assistance of staff in ECA, should be required to conduct at least five virtual outreach sessions with student groups at U.S. high schools, community colleges, universities, or Americorps that have not previously produced a recent Fulbright grantee.

• Create a program to match diplomats overseas with schools in the United States, pairing select FSOs with high school and college students throughout the United States in a manner similar to the Peace Corps’ Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools program. The program would provide a virtual, interactive front row seat to the inner workings of missions abroad, as well as an online resource library reflecting the multiplicity of locations where FSOs serve. The program would also center equity, diversity, and inclusion by targeting HBCUs, HSIs, community colleges, and secondary schools that serve students from historically marginalized groups.

• Rebrand the “Foreign Service of the United States” as the “United States Diplomatic Service” to better communicate the purpose and mission of the State Department.

Legislators:

• Increase appropriations for the Hometown Diplomat program, including a more robust staff to facilitate program elements, and to provide better training and resources for participating employees. Provide per diem and transportation funding for employees during these engagements and compensate employees for time spent in speaking engagements during home leave to reduce barriers to participation.

• Expand foreign exchange opportunities for young people in high school (and transitioning to higher education) through dedicated funding opportunities. Expanding programs like the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) program and Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange program are first steps.

• Expand the DIR program by establishing DIR tours in every U.S. state and territory, including the possibility of DIR bridge assignments of less than one year. Significantly increase the DIR outreach budget in collaboration with the host college or university, with a special focus on assigning DIRs to HBCUs and HSIs.

• Allow Civil Service employees to serve in the DIR program.

Legislators:

• Amend the Smith-Mundt Act to clarify and widen Department authorities to proactively engage Americans and partner with local institutions around foreign policy issues. In an increasingly globalized world, international developments directly impact Americans and their local communities; recalibrating the Department’s authorities is essential for transforming the Department’s ability to be responsive to 21st century realities.

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40. Established in 1989, the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools program is focused on providing educational resources—through lesson plans, activities, and events—to promote the Peace Corps’ goal of building Americans’ understanding of the world. See: Peace Corps.


42. Early exposure to international communities is key to kindling interest in foreign affairs policy and careers, yet only one in 10 Americans study abroad in university with even fewer having such opportunities during their secondary education. See: Institute for International Education. “Open Doors Report,” 2018.

43. Diplomats in Residence are career FSOs and Foreign Service Specialists assigned to various regions of the country to offer guidance to students and communities about the Department, foreign policy, and opportunities in the diplomatic field. They are most often assigned to universities. See: State Department.

**Why State and Local Diplomacy Matters**

**Luis Renta**, Former U.S. Department of State Franklin Fellow, currently Assistant Executive Director, U.S. Conference of Mayors

In 1974, when Senator James B. Pearson introduced S.2944, “A bill to provide for the assignment of Foreign Service officers to certain public organizations,” he was addressing two issues: First, the necessity for the Foreign Service to reconnect with other Americans in between vast amounts of time spent overseas, and second, state and local governments’ need for assistance with their international engagement.

Forty-seven years later, in a globalized, networked world, the State Department still faces the same challenge: The need for a coherent strategy that leverages subnational actors to further American foreign policy interests.

I started my service at the State Department as a Benjamin Franklin Fellow. When William P. Pope administered the oath and welcomed me to the State Department, he said “you need to be disruptive and question everything.” Little did I know that those words would turn a one-year fellowship into the next chapter in my professional life. I was assigned to the office of the Special Representative for Global Intergovernmental Affairs because they needed help, and since that day I’ve had the opportunity to help elected leaders from across the country engage with their international peers.

Throughout my ten years in subnational diplomacy, I’ve learned that the U.S. has never had a coherent approach on engagement in this esoteric area of international affairs. In my experience, there is a preference in the Foreign Service to exclude subnational actors, but the reality is that non-state-actors – whether it be NGOs, governors, mayors, or corporations – play important roles in international affairs. If we don’t leverage them in our engagement with subnational leaders from around the world, then we are failing to use every tool of diplomacy we have to advance the interests of the United States.

Today’s subnational diplomacy is much more complex in breadth and scope than President Eisenhower’s Sister Cities model, with local governments cooperating on climate change, economic development, and security. Cities are forming networks like the C40 Climate Leaders or the Strong Cities Network, while states sign memoranda on climate and security and work with the private sector to attract investment from around the world.

In the past year, I have been working with a coalition, led by Congressman Ted Lieu, to institutionalize the State Department’s engagement with subnational actors through legislation. The State and City Diplomacy Act would make Senator Pearson’s vision a reality, providing “that each Foreign Service officer shall, between his eighth and fifteenth years of service, be assigned in the continental United States for duty with state and local governments.”

Imagine a Foreign Service where every officer is required to do rotations with state and local governments. How much more connected to foreign policy would the American people be, and how many new networks would those Foreign Service officers have access to?

To address the diplomatic challenges of the 21st century, we need to double the size of the Foreign Service Corps, and we need those officers to be connected to the American people.
3.3 - Expanding the Diplomatic Toolkit to Engage Diverse Audiences

We envision a State Department with an expanded diplomatic toolkit that reimagines the professional development of personnel and proactively cultivates relationships with a range of foreign policy networks.

A. Creating a National Diplomacy University and Broadening Training Options

Policymakers:

• Create a National Diplomacy University modeled on the Department of Defense universities. The NDU should grant graduate level degrees, and allow entrance to diplomatic personnel from other countries’ diplomatic corps in conjunction with existing FSI programs. Mandate a minimum number of State Department staff who must be enrolled per year and prioritize hiring of current and former PhD-level staff from the Department to fill teaching positions.

• FSI and GTM should revamp the training curriculum for personnel undertaking recruitment roles and make such training accessible to every FTE. The course should be mandatory for all mid- to senior career employees.

Legislators:

• 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, whether due to international necessity or crises. The Reserve Corps would allow the Department to respond without affecting current operations; enable diplomats to take a break from active service to pursue academic or work interests and return to the Department with their widened skill set; and utilize specialty skill sets of individuals with careers outside of public service to fill gaps in knowledge or expertise.

B. Deepening Connections with Foreign Policy Networks Across the Country

Policymakers:

• Cultivate greater ties with networks like Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers associations, World Affairs Councils, United Nations Associations, Global Ties, and other organizations in order to provide regular access to Department speakers who can address pressing areas of community interest.

• Establish formal institutional relationships with local community-based organizations and other service-based organizations (e.g. Americorps, scouting, etc.) to kindle interest and understanding in global affairs.

• Create a virtual speaker series to serve as a rapid response to domestic issues that have an international nexus.

• Create a centralized resource hub, through the Office of State and Local Diplomacy (OSLD), enabling personnel to identify and engage directly with educational or cultural institutions; locate official policy guidance on proper public-facing protocols; record and upload presentations on their regional or subject matter expertise; and connect diplomats overseas with members of the American public.

45. Among the benefits of including foreign diplomats and foreign civil servants in the academic environment of FSI is the sharing of U.S. values and best practices directly with diplomatic personnel of our partners and allies. This would provide these partners with the understanding of how the U.S. operates and facilitate and exchange of values and best practices among different diplomatic corps. Like Department of Defense War Colleges and NDU, the benefits of such academic collaborations aid in maintaining long-term relationships both among the individual participants and their governments.

46. For example, experts from the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism could be tapped to offer context on ideologies, recruitment, financing and effective counterterrorism strategies in the wake of a domestic terrorist attack.
A Career Shift from Diplomacy to Tech Policy

Siobhan Oat-Judge, Former U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer, current Global Content Policy Lead, YouTube

After a decade in the Foreign Service, I made a career change, transitioning to working in tech policy. While I’ve embraced wholeheartedly the many things that are different about working in tech, I have appreciated having a sense of mission and purpose motivating my work, just as it did while I was in the Foreign Service. I have also been surprised by how many of the skills I developed at the State Department prepared me for the challenges I face in my new career – and how much the tech sector can learn from the State Department.

As social media platforms based in the U.S. face increased challenges globally—and increased expectations that they will mitigate problems around the globe, the need for greater cooperation between social media companies and the State Department is increasingly clear. In countries facing civil unrest or war, the State Department can help platforms navigate the complex issues around human rights, hate speech and incitement to violence that require deep local knowledge to diagnose.

State has that expertise, which social media companies often lack for all of the countries in which their platforms are available. In countries where governments may seek to throttle opposition by blocking their access to platforms, or even by shutting down social media entirely, the State Department can help tech companies understand the political context so that they can make decisions that meet their goal of preserving openness on the platform, while balancing the need to adhere to local laws. Above all, the State Department can share with tech companies their assessments of countries that are likely to experience unrest, so that companies can plan ahead, rather than reacting to unfolding scenarios too late, as happened with content on social media encouraging ethnic violence in Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

In turn, State can benefit from the deep understanding social media platforms have of how their platforms are being used in countries of interest, in terms of political dynamics, terrorism, human rights, and also on topics like the COVID-19 pandemic. While reporting officers often have contacts who are disproportionately elite and based in cities where the State Department has posts, social media platforms can help officers expand their reach to other communities and tiers of society, to deepen their understanding for the betterment of their reporting and of each post’s reach into their host country.
Outreach to the American public should be a cornerstone of our work as public servants. For years, I served as a volunteer recruiter and have had numerous chances to speak to the public while working at the State Department. However, all of this outreach and work was due entirely to my own initiative, willingness to pay my own way, and stubbornness to get out on the road. As a Ph.D. geographer, I go to many professional conferences and meetings that are relevant to my work at State, yet the best I can get from the Department is approval to take “Administrative Leave,” rather than using personal leave when attending these meetings. Even when I speak on panels about career opportunities at State or about work directly relevant to my job, I have had to pay my own way. On two occasions, I was invited to speak in California and the city that hosted me offered to pay for my airfare, hotel, etc. While State was willing to let me go, it felt horribly inappropriate that there was no funding from the Department to help facilitate this outreach where I was the face of American diplomacy to many audiences. This outreach should not be an incidental function that relies on individual employees to press for the right to go speak and often bear the cost of their outreach, when such work is not only in the national interest, but is our duty to the very taxpayers we serve.
Appendix of Acronyms
## Appendix of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFSA</td>
<td>American Foreign Service Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDIO</td>
<td>Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary of State for Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>D Committee</td>
<td>Reviews candidates to serve as chiefs of mission (COM), deputy assistant secretaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-MR</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>D&amp;I</td>
<td>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Mission (the second in command in a U.S. embassy)</td>
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<td>DETO</td>
<td>Domestic Employee Telework Option</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIR</td>
<td>Diplomat in Residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Global Talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAD</td>
<td>Disability and Reasonable Accommodations Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Bureau of Diplomatic Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIR</td>
<td>Entrepreneur in Residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEO</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEOC</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EER</td>
<td>Employee Evaluation Review (used for the Foreign Service performance evaluations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Executive Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>Federal Acquisition Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEVS</td>
<td>Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSI</td>
<td>Foreign Service Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLIFAA</td>
<td>Gay and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTM</td>
<td>Bureau of Global Talent Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Bureau of Legislative Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>Historically Black Colleges and Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFAC</td>
<td>U.S. House of Representatives House Foreign Affairs Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSI</td>
<td>Hispanic-Serving Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRM</td>
<td>Bureau of Information Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Office of the Legal Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LES</td>
<td>Locally Employed Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and people with gender expressions outside traditional norms, including nonbinary, intersex, and other queer people (and those questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Under Secretary for Management Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>Bureau of Medical Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDA</td>
<td>Nondisclosure Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBO</td>
<td>Bureau of Overseas Building Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Office of Entertainment Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFM</td>
<td>Office of Foreign Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OID</td>
<td>Office of Innovation Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIG</td>
<td>Office of the Inspector General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPM</td>
<td>Office of Personnel Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSLD</td>
<td>Office of State and Local Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDAS</td>
<td>Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARPA</td>
<td>State Advanced Research Projects Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/OCR</td>
<td>Office of Civil Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Senior Executive Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFRC</td>
<td>U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFS</td>
<td>Senior Foreign Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQA</td>
<td>Superior Qualifications Authority (per 5 CFR 531.212)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements and Press Inquiries
Acknowledgements

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Press Inquiries

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