Academy Review

June 2026

Academy Efforts and Successes on Capitol Hill

H.R. 8167 Co-sponsors
119th Congress (2025-2026)



Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV)



Rep. Michael Baumgarnter (R-WA)

BLUEPRINTS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Academy's efforts on the Hill to implement recommendations from the Blueprints for a More Modern Diplomatic Service report are finally producing some small but hopeful results.

On March 30, Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-NV), together with Congressman Michael Baumgartner (R-WA), introduced a bipartisan bill, H.R. 8167, "To amend the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to establish a Diplomatic Reserve Corps." After its introduction, Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC) also added his co-sponsorship to the bill. HFAC Majority is also supportive of the Diplomatic Reserve Corps (DRC) concept and continues to consult with the Academy as they work with the State Department on the particulars of the DRC pilot concept.

In parallel, the Academy is working with both Majority and Minority staff on SFRC to include the DRC language in their State Authorization process this year. At State, the Undersecretary for Management is supportive, although not in a position to make a definitive commitment.

(Continued on p. 2)



First Academy Press Briefing

On March 19, the Academy hosted several journalists for a press briefing on the crisis management protocols of the State Department during the escalation in the Middle East, specifically Iran. The panel, organized by Media Committee co-chairs Yael Lempert and Michael Ratney and Action Group members including John Feeley, consisted of AAD members John Bass, Jeffrey Feltman, Yael Lempert, Elizabeth Richard, and Aline Romanowski. We had journalists representing the Wall Street Journal, CNN, Associated Press, ABC News, Bloomberg News, Univision, Reuters, Politico, Crooked Media, Foreign Policy, Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, PBS Newshour, and Channel 4 News. Associated Press and SBS News published stories with context from the briefing. Following the briefing, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Global Public Affairs, Dylan Johnson, made a series of posts disparaging AAD members. Both **AAD** and **AFSA** issued statements in response to those attacks.

Foreign Service Day 2026

On May 1, the Academy joined the American Foreign Service Association in marking Foreign Service Day. For the first time in its history, the Memorial Plaque Ceremony was not held at the Department of State. AAD joined AFSA outside the Department for an unofficial ceremony. Attendees reflected on the USAID Memorial Wall and honored their USAID colleagues whose names will be added.



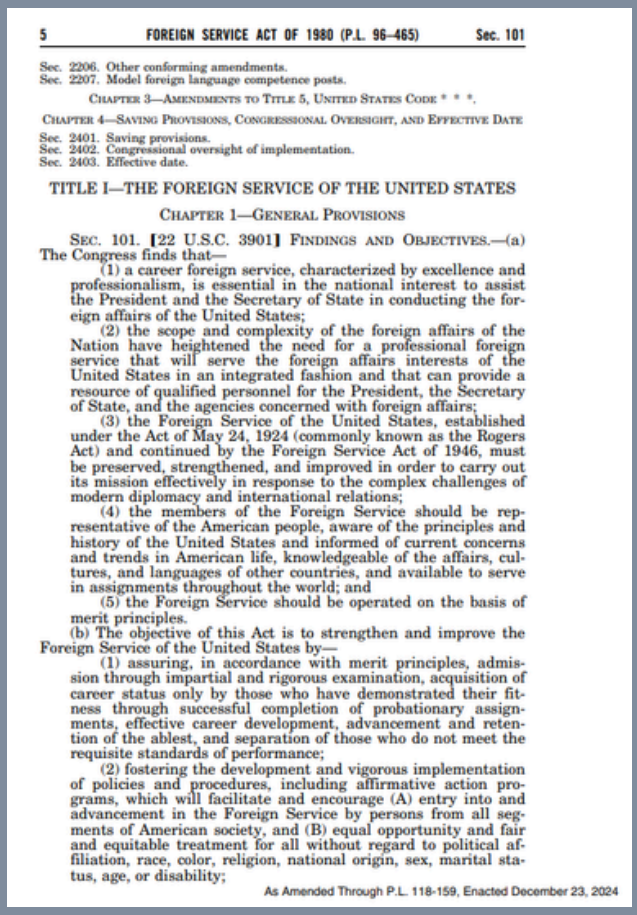
Academy on Capitol Hill

Continued from p. 1

FOREIGN SERVICE ACT REWRITE

In addition to implementing the Blueprints recommendations, the Academy has been closely involved in HFAC Chairman Mast's effort to rewrite the Foreign Service Act of 1980. In preparation for this effort, the Academy put together a short list of items from the original Act that, in the Academy's view, are essential and must remain in the new Act. The Academy has also been watching to ensure that the diversity language and the Foreign Service union's legal status are preserved and that no poison pills are introduced into the new Act as part of this process.

The original plan for a full-scale rewrite has been replaced by a smaller targeted effort. So far, we have succeeded in preserving the authority of the Director General and other matters. We do not see any provisions that would pose serious risks to effective diplomacy. HFAC Majority staff wants a truly bipartisan effort and values working with the Academy to facilitate that.



5 FOREIGN SERVICE ACT OF 1980 (P.L. 96–465) Sec. 101

Sec. 2206. Other conforming amendments.
Sec. 2207. Model foreign language competence posts.

CHAPTER 3—AMENDMENTS TO TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE * * *.

CHAPTER 4—SAVING PROVISIONS, CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT, AND EFFECTIVE DATE

Sec. 2401. Saving provisions.
Sec. 2402. Congressional oversight of implementation.
Sec. 2403. Effective date.

TITLE I—THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER 1—GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. [22 U.S.C. 3901] FINDINGS AND OBJECTIVES.—(a) The Congress finds that—

(1) a career foreign service, characterized by excellence and professionalism, is essential in the national interest to assist the President and the Secretary of State in conducting the foreign affairs of the United States;

(2) the scope and complexity of the foreign affairs of the Nation have heightened the need for a professional foreign service that will serve the foreign affairs interests of the United States in an integrated fashion and that can provide a resource of qualified personnel for the President, the Secretary of State, and the agencies concerned with foreign affairs;

(3) the Foreign Service of the United States, established under the Act of May 24, 1924 (commonly known as the Rogers Act) and continued by the Foreign Service Act of 1946, must be preserved, strengthened, and improved in order to carry out its mission effectively in response to the complex challenges of modern diplomacy and international relations;

(4) the members of the Foreign Service should be representative of the American people, aware of the principles and history of the United States and informed of current concerns and trends in American life, knowledgeable of the affairs, cultures, and languages of other countries, and available to serve in assignments throughout the world; and

(5) the Foreign Service should be operated on the basis of merit principles.

(b) The objective of this Act is to strengthen and improve the Foreign Service of the United States by—

(1) assuring, in accordance with merit principles, admission through impartial and rigorous examination, acquisition of career status only by those who have demonstrated their fitness through successful completion of probationary assignments, effective career development, advancement and retention of the ablest, and separation of those who do not meet the requisite standards of performance;

(2) fostering the development and vigorous implementation of policies and procedures, including affirmative action programs, which will facilitate and encourage (A) entry into and advancement in the Foreign Service by persons from all segments of American society, and (B) equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment for all without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or disability;

As Amended Through P.L. 118-159, Enacted December 23, 2024

Earlier in the year, the Academy convened two "Four Corners" briefings for the SFRC and HFAC Majority and Minority staffs, who appreciated the chance for a bipartisan discussion and the opportunity to ask for AAD's views on various issues. Since then, the Academy commented on two detailed legislative drafts. Our comments have produced change. The process continues.

Donors & Program Partners

The Academy would like to extend a sincere thank you to our donors, supporters, and program partners, without whom we would not be able to host the programs and do the work we do today.

American Foreign Service Association
Arizona State University
Arthur Ross Foundation
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Johnston-Hanson Foundation
Kent School
Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello
Sisco Family Fund
Thomas Jefferson Foundation
Una Chapman Cox Foundation
University of California Riverside
University of Idaho
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Nebraska at Lincoln and Omaha
University of Virginia
Walter and Leonore Annenberg Foundation
Wyoming High School

University Outreach Programs

Between the end of 2025 and the first half of 2026, the Academy continued to implement its recurring outreach programs at several universities.

On November 21, 2025, AAD held its annual conference at Monticello, titled ***Representing a Nation: The Making of a Diplomat***. The discussion featured AAD members Carol Perez, Alonzo Fulgham, James Jeffrey, and Ron Neumann. The keynote address was delivered by Marc Grossman. The event was well-attended, including by many University of Virginia Center for Politics students, who also joined the speakers for a roundtable luncheon prior to the conference. For the first time, the conference included a panel moderated by a UVA student, Sophia Bangura.

On January 23, 2026, AAD member Chris Henzel traveled to Indiana University's Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies for a day of discussions on diplomacy and global security as part of the **Academy's outreach program to promote the episodes of *The General and the Ambassador Podcast***. The program included talks on "What Really Happens When Diplomacy Meets War: Lessons from Yemen" and "Shifting Alliances in the Gulf and their Implications from the Middle East to New York."

On February 24, 2026, AAD members Deborah McCarthy, Kathleen Stephens, Philip Reeker, and Ron Neumann traveled to Georgia Southern University for the inaugural **Georgia Southern University Ambassadors Forum.** The panel met with students and community members and discussed how to "better understand current events and how effective diplomacy can positively position the United States."

International Leadership of Texas

On February 27, 2026, the Academy welcomed yet another student cohort from the International Leadership of Texas (ILTexas) public charter schools, who were in DC for a weeklong leadership and career development program. Thirty-six high school seniors spent half a day at the Academy and met with AAD members Ricardo Zúñiga, Richard Hoagland, Greta Holtz, and John Tefft. Each presentation was followed by a Q&A session, during which the students discussed current foreign policy issues and received advice on pursuing careers in diplomacy. They eagerly joined in the discussions of foreign affairs.











MEMBER CORNER

In Memoriam

The Academy lost several great friends and colleagues this year. We thank them for their friendship and service and honor their memory.



Robert A. Flaten
May 21, 1934 - Dec. 21, 2025



Lee H. Hamilton
Apr. 20, 1931 - Feb. 3, 2026



Robert E. Hunter
May 1, 1940 - Jan. 18, 2026



William B. Milam
Jul. 24, 1936 - Feb. 17, 2026



David Bruce Wharton
Mar. 23, 1954 - Apr. 14, 2026

Academy Action Group Update

The Academy's Action Group continues to meet regularly and look for ways to channel members' expertise to defend institutions of professional American diplomacy. Earlier this year, the Group produced two sets of **talking points for use by AAD members**. The first set focuses on the issue of the **Importance of the US Diplomatic Service**. It is designed to be used by members broadly in speaking engagements, interviews, and during town halls. The second set focuses specifically on the issue of **The Evacuation of US Citizens from the Middle East**. Both sets were distributed to all members by email. If you missed that email, please reach out to Academy staff to get a new copy.

Founders' Society

The Academy would like to recognize the 53 members who went above and beyond in helping us achieve the goal of long-term sustainability by contributing or pledging $10,000 or more to the Academy's fundraising campaigns:

Madeleine Albright (in memory)
John Allen
Hushang Ansary
Robert Blake
Barbara Bodine
Thomas Boyatt
Kate Canavan
Timothy Carney
Charles E. Cobb
Paula Dobriansky
Shaun Donnelly
Nancy Ely-Raphel
Henrietta Fore
Alonzo L. Fulgham
Harold Geisel
Robert Gelbard
Edward Gnehm
Marc Grossman
John Hamre
William Harrop (in memory)
Stuart Holliday
Robert E. Hunter (in memory)
Jon Huntsman
Kay Bailey Hutchison
Janice Jacobs
Richard Jones
Craig A. Kelly
Patrick Kennedy
Robert Kimmitt
Steven Mann
Larry Napper
John Negroponte
Ronald E. Neumann
Thomas R. Nides
Catherine Novelli
Robert O'Brien
Anne Patterson
Thomas R. Pickering
Francis Ricciardone
Rozanne Ridgway
Charles Rivkin
Peter Romero
Edward Rowell (in memory)
George Shultz (in memory)
Carol Sisco
Ronald Spiers (in memory)
Clyde Taylor
Francis X. Taylor
Michael Van Dusen
David Welch
Frank Wisner (in memory)
John Wolf
Robert Zoellick

It's Nomination Season!



Summer is the time for **nominating new Academy members**. We do not get any notification from the State Department of who has left, so we depend on members to remember good candidates. We invite you to take an active part in this year's process to select qualified candidates to join the Academy's membership. The process is spearheaded by the Membership Committee, chaired by Frank Almaguer. The official call for new member nominations will go out on June 23, but if you would like to get an early start, just email AAD staff for details now! The deadline for submitting nominations is August 19, 2026.



Summer is also when the Book Award Committee and the Media Award Committee are actively working to identify candidates for their respective awards. So, if you recently published a book on American diplomacy, please encourage your publisher to submit it for the Academy's Dillon Book Award. Likewise, **if you know of a recently published book on American diplomacy, please let the Book Committee Chair, Jenonne Walker (or AAD staff) know**, so that we can follow up with the publisher. And if you regularly read the works of a journalist or a commentator and would like to see them recognized, **email the Media Award Committee co-chairs, Yael Lempert and Michael Ratney (or AAD staff), to nominate that journalist or commentator for the Ross Award.**

Member Lunches

The Academy continues to hold periodic member lunches at DACOR Bacon House on a variety of topics. Back in December 2025, new member George Kent spoke about "Ride4Ukraine: Engaging Americans on Ukraine-Russia Along the TransAmerica Bike Trail." In February, the Academy's Executive Committee gathered to welcome our new members. Our **next member lunch will be on June 23, 2026, and will feature Ricardo Zúñiga on the subject of US-Cuba relations.**

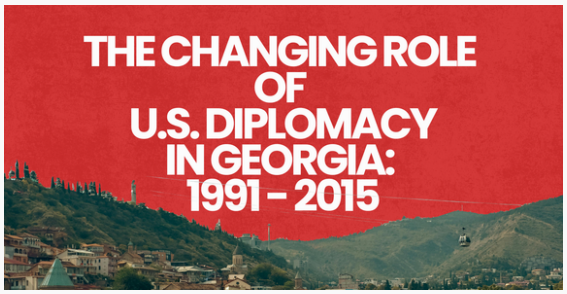
Upcoming Outreach Programs

SEPT. 11-16, 2026	UC Riverside Robert Heath Global Policy Summer Scholar Program
SEPT. 28-29, 2026	2026 Sisco Memorial Forum at Texas A&M University featuring David Satterfield, Geoff Pyatt, Rena Bitter, and Ronald Neumann
OCT. 26-27, 2026	Nebraska Ambassadors Forum at Omaha and Lincoln featuring Marcia Bernicat, James Jeffrey, Anthony "Bud" Rock, and Ronald Neumann
NOV. 20, 2026	AAD Monticello Conference "American Diplomacy at 250" featuring Deborah McCarthy, Glenn Gerstell, Joan Polaschik, John Bass, and Ronald Neumann

INTERN PROJECTS

Every semester, AAD welcomes interns to its team. In addition to assisting the Academy with its day-to-day operations, our interns have the opportunity to create their own independent projects. Below are the recent outstanding projects completed by some of our interns.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF U.S. DIPLOMACY IN GEORGIA: 1991-2015



Spring '26 intern Clara Hastings, a student at American University, wrote an article on the changing role of U.S. diplomacy in Georgia during the period from 1991 to 2015. The article included stories from AAD members John Bass, William Courtney, Richard Miles, Richard Norland, and Kenneth Yalowitz. The full article can be read on our website **here**.

PANEL DISCUSSION: U.S. ASEAN DIPLOMACY



On December 4, 2025, AAD intern Maria Ryan, a student at the College of the Holy Cross, held a virtual discussion on the subject of **"Navigating U.S. Diplomacy in Southeast Asia."** The panel, moderated by AAD member Harry Thomas, featured AAD members Brian McFeeters, Piper Campbell, and Charles Ray.

PODCAST SERIES: DIPLOMACY & CRITICAL MINERAL ACCESS IN AFRICA



Fall '25 intern Colin FitzSimmons, a student at George Washington University, created a three-part podcast series on U.S. diplomacy and critical minerals in Africa. The series featured AAD members Reuben Brigety, Tibor Nagy, and J. Peter Pham and can be watched **here**.

American Diplomat Podcast

The American Diplomat Podcast has a new co-host! Academy member, Dan Rosenblum, has taken over as Peter Romero transitions to a new role at Arizona State University's new program, the Diplomat Lounge. The American Diplomat continues to highlight stories from professional diplomats, including several Academy members. Overall, this year the podcast recorded 47 new episodes and reached 147,000 new unique downloads. The most recent nine episodes feature Dan Rosenblum as the new co-host. Be sure to follow the American Diplomat wherever you get your podcasts!



STAFF UPDATE



From left to right: ***Sydney Spencer*** *(Spring '26 Intern),* ***Josh Davis*** *(Public Affairs Coordinator),* ***Clara Hastings*** *(Spring '26 Intern),* ***Amb. (ret.) Ron Neumann*** *(President),* ***Maria Reissaus*** *(Excecutive Director), and* ***Morgan Kogan*** *(Program & Finance Assistant).*



Amanda Lisi



Anna Liston



William O'Reilly

All of the work at the Academy is performed by a tiny yet mighty staff.

Up until now, the position of the Graduate Fellow, which is currently held by Josh Davis, has been a year-long part-time appointment. However, given the Academy's growing social media footprint and expanding programs, Josh will become a full-time Public Affairs Coordinator, starting in June.

The Academy also continues its year-round intern program, which welcomes 2-3 interns from universities around the country each semester. In the spring of 2026, our interns were Clara Hastings from American University and Sydney Spencer from Brigham Young University. This summer, our interns are Amanda Lisi from George Washington University, Anna Liston from the University of Maryland, and William O'Reilly from Virginia Tech. We are grateful for their enthusiasm and meaningful contributions to the Academy!

Our internship program frequently serves as a springboard for young people into the world of diplomacy, and many of them go on to accomplish exciting new things after leaving the Academy. For example, Marlaina Garczynski, one of AAD's Summer 2025 interns, is set to join the Peace Corps in Namibia doing public outreach for an HIV clinic. And Maria Ryan, one of our Fall 2025 interns, will soon head to Indonesia for an internship with the Department of State. We are incredibly proud of them and all of our other internship alumni!

Academy Social Media Presence

At the start of 2026, the Academy renewed its presence on TikTok. In keeping with our mission to strengthen U.S. diplomacy, we are now producing short-form vertical video content posted on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to be shared with young people, targeting late high school and early college students. These videos aim to demystify and educate viewers on diplomacy through vocab lessons, explanations on current events, and stories from Academy members.

Our most dramatic growth has been on TikTok, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Our total views in 2026 are ~42,000 on TikTok, ~100,000 on Facebook, and ~284,000 on LinkedIn. We are seeing sustained growth across all of our social media platforms. If you would like to receive more information on the Academy's online presence, or are interested in starting your own page, please contact Josh Davis at jdavis@academyofdiplomacy.org.

Visit our website for more information on Academy Press Releases, programs, awards, and to pay your dues.

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