



AARON PARNAS

Aaron Parnas is one of the leading Gen Z voices shaping how news is consumed today. An independent journalist, political commentator, strategist, and attorney, Aaron has quickly become a key figure in the national political conversation, offering sharp insights at the intersection of law, media, and policy.

He first gained widespread attention through viral, educational content that breaks down complex political issues in a fast, accessible way—particularly resonating with younger, highly engaged audiences. His rapid-response analysis of major court decisions, legislative battles, and election narratives has made him a trusted voice for millions across platforms.

He played a significant role in shaping the digital narrative around the 2022 and 2024 election cycles, with his rapid-response commentary consistently reaching millions. During Senator Cory Booker’s record-breaking 25-hour Senate speech protesting the Trump administration’s policies, Aaron conducted the second interview—following Rachel Maddow—highlighting how quickly he’s become part of the political conversation.

He graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a B.A. in political science and criminal justice at age 18, and earned his J.D. from The George Washington University Law School at 21—one of the youngest ever to do so.



REV. ADAM TAYLOR

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of *A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community*. Follow him on Bluesky @revadamtaylor.

Taylor previously led the Faith Initiative at the World Bank Group and served as the vice president in charge of Advocacy at World Vision U.S. and the senior political director at Sojourners. He has also served as the executive director of Global Justice, an organization that educates and mobilizes students around global human rights and economic justice. He was selected for the 2009/2010 class of White House Fellows and served in the White House Office of Cabinet Affairs and Public Engagement.

Taylor is a graduate of Emory University, the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. Taylor also serves on the Independent Sector Board, the Global Advisory Board of Tearfund UK, and is a member of the inaugural class of the Aspen Institute Civil Society Fellowship.

Taylor is ordained in the American Baptist Church and the Progressive National Baptist Convention and serves in ministry at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va.



AMAN GEORGE

Aman George is a Senior Counsel at Democracy Forward. He has been with the organization since 2017 and has litigated a wide variety of cases against both Trump Administrations. Since 2025, he has litigated a number of cases seeking to protect the privacy of Americans' data from reckless federal data consolidation efforts led by DOGE and other administration leaders. He has also recently been involved in cases fighting civil rights abuses by ICE and seeking to protect critical homelessness services funding from reckless cuts.



MA AG ANDREA CAMPBELL

On January 18, 2023, Andrea Joy Campbell was sworn in to be the 45th Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, becoming the first woman of color to win statewide office in Massachusetts.

She, along with her incredible team, are committed to ensuring their work is responsive to the needs of residents and businesses. They pledge to build economic prosperity for all residents, prioritize the mental health and well-being of children, and break cycles of poverty, incarceration and mediocrity while ensuring that people across the state have access to the AG's Office regardless of their zip code, language or ability.

Before becoming Attorney General, in 2015, Andrea successfully ran for the Boston City Council, becoming the first woman to represent District 4 on the Council. Her first piece of legislation was the Community Preservation Act, which still generates over \$20 million annually for new affordable housing, historical preservation, and parks and open space. In 2018, she was unanimously elected City Council President – the first Black woman to hold that title.



ANDREW EGGER

Andrew Egger is White House Correspondent for the Bulwark, where he writes the Morning Shots newsletter with Bill Kristol. He formerly covered campaigns for The Dispatch and The Weekly Standard. He lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife and three kids.



ANDREW MCCABE

Andrew G. McCabe is the author of the New York Times bestselling book, *The Threat: How the FBI Protects America in the Age of Terror and Trump*. He is currently a senior law enforcement analyst for CNN, a distinguished visiting professor at George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government, a consultant and advisor to cyber companies, and the co-host of the podcast “Unjustified” about the policies and actions of the Department of Justice.

Mr. McCabe began his 21-year FBI career in 1996 as a special agent assigned to the New York City Field Office, where he investigated Russian organized crime cases. In 2006, Mr. McCabe shifted his focus to national security when he was promoted to FBI Headquarters in the Counterterrorism Division. He went on to serve in numerous high level leadership positions in the FBI including, assistant director of the Counterterrorism Division, executive assistant director of the National Security Branch, assistant director in charge of the Washington Field Office, and Deputy Director of the FBI. In 2017, Mr. McCabe served as the acting FBI director after the firing of James Comey. He retired from the FBI in 2018.

Before entering the FBI, Mr. McCabe worked as a lawyer in private practice. He received a BA from Duke University in 1990 and JD from Washington University in St. Louis School of Law in 1993. Mr. McCabe is a certified senior intelligence officer, and he was awarded the FBI Director’s Award and the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service. Mr. McCabe is married, has two children, and lives in northern Virginia.



ANKUSH KHARDORI

Ankush Khardori is a Senior Staff Writer and Columnist for Politico Magazine. He writes the Rules of Law column, a reported column that examines the intersection of politics and the law.

Ankush is an attorney and former federal prosecutor who specialized in financial fraud and white-collar crime before leaving the Justice Department in 2020. He was also the legal affairs columnist for New York magazine and has written for a variety of other news outlets, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The Financial Times, The Atlantic, The New York Review of Books, TIME magazine, USA Today, WIRED, Slate, The New Republic, and the Columbia Journalism Review.

Ankush also provides legal commentary and analysis for television, radio and podcasts, including MS NOW, CNN, the BBC, and NPR.

Prior to joining the Justice Department, Ankush worked at a law firm in New York City, where he specialized in commercial litigation and white-collar corporate defense. He clerked for a judge in the Southern District of New York and graduated from Columbia University with a B.A. and J.D.



ARIANA BERENGAUT

Ariana Berengaut is the Democracy Forward Civil Service Strong Fellow for national security and foreign policy. Berengaut most recently served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan from January 2021 to January 2025. In the Obama Administration, she served as speechwriter and counselor to then-Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken and, prior to that, as chief speechwriter and senior advisor to USAID Administrator Raj Shah. In the years in between government service, she was a founding director at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement and an adjunct lecturer of speechwriting at Georgetown University. She worked on the Obama and Biden presidential campaigns, as well as the Biden presidential transition. She started her career at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Committee on Conscience. Her writing has appeared in The New York Times, Foreign Affairs, and The Atlantic. Born in Washington, DC, she is a graduate of Brandeis University and the University of Oxford, completing her graduate fieldwork in southeastern Uganda.



ASHLEY TUCKER

Ashley Tucker serves as AFI's Co-Executive Director, leading the planning and implementation of its programs, operations, and legal services for at-risk artists. Having lived, worked and volunteered abroad for many years, Ms. Tucker has dedicated her career to international human rights and social justice.

Ms. Tucker has worked for the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, the Centre for Civil and Political Rights, and PEN America's Artists at Risk Connection. She has worked on strategic litigation before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, conducted research and human rights trainings in Haiti, and worked as a volunteer in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Ms. Tucker received her BA from the University of Arizona in Studio Art, and her JD from City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law. Ms. Tucker holds certificates in Art & Cultural Heritage Law from Georgetown University Law Center and in Nonprofit Executive Management from Tufts University and the Institute for Nonprofit Practice. Ms. Tucker is admitted to practice law in New York.



AZZA COHEN

AZZA COHEN (she/her) is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and a leading voice on sexism in visual media. From 2022-2025, she served as Vice President Kamala Harris's official videographer and director of video in the White House, documenting historic moments from the Oval Office to 91 cities across 28 states and 11 countries. She's currently lensing another incredible Black woman as campaign videographer to Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett in her historic U.S. Senate run.

Azza's viral Slate op-ed "I Was Kamala Harris' Videographer. The Experience Completely Changed Me," published on Inauguration Day 2025, trended on Apple and Yahoo News for over a week, and sparked a national movement for fairer portrayals of women in media. As a regular columnist for The Contrarian on Substack, she uses her platform to educate creators and consumers of media on how to better represent women in politics with the dignity and authority they deserve. In Spring 2025, Azza taught a guest seminar at Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics on feminist framing and is currently a Fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. She speaks across the country in an effort to change the way women are represented on screen. Azza's Substack and forthcoming book *Split Screen* connect photographic, cinematographic, and other visual media choices to broader cultural patterns of gender discrimination. She is represented by Bridget Matzie at Aevitas Creative.

Azza earned an MFA in Documentary Film & Video from Stanford University as a Knight-Hennessy Scholar, an MA in Culture & Colonialism from the University of Galway as a Mitchell Scholar, and a BA in History from Princeton University. She has over a decade of experience across film and television, having worked on projects including HBO's *Bleed Out*, Netflix's *This Changes Everything*, and National Geographic's *IMPACT* with Gal Gadot.



BRIAN JOHNSON

Brian C. Johnson is the Founder of the Reimagining Capitalism Lab, a research and policy hub grounded in community voice that seeks to advance bold solutions to reduce economic inequality in America. Prior to this role, he served as the CEO of Equality Illinois for nearly a decade where he led the passage of over 25 laws and regulatory changes to make Illinois one of the most queer-affirming states in the country. He has also led teams who have achieved policy wins for teachers, students, and families across the country from Los Angeles to Charlotte to Washington DC. He credits his first job as a first-grade teacher in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with igniting in him the spark to fight to make sure that America lives up to her promises for all her residents.

Brian is the author of *Our Fair Share: How One Small Change Can Create a More Equitable American Economy* which the Chicago Tribune called "clear and compelling." He earned his AB magna cum laude from Princeton University, his JD from Stanford Law School, and his MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business where he was an Arjay Miller Scholar. He lives in Chicago with his husband Toby and their daughter Josephine.



CAROLINA MARTINEZ

Carolina Martinez has considerable experience leading non-profit organizations and multicultural teams in North and South America. She has coached entrepreneurs in the development and execution of their business plans. In Colombia, she worked with vulnerable communities to identify business opportunities and develop strategic and marketing plans. In 2011, she joined Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADCB) in Pennsylvania, where she taught 18-week classes for pre-ventures and startups. In 2012, she became the director of the Kutztown University Small Business Development Center's Latino Business Resource Center (LBRC). She returned to CADCB in 2015 as the Director to support the economic development of South Bethlehem and coordinate its 6-year revitalization plan.

In 2016 Carolina opened her own business, The Puentes Group, a consulting firm focused on providing small businesses with marketing and business strategies and accounting services to manage their growth. Carolina joined CAMEO Network as its CEO in 2018.

Carolina serves on the Entrepreneurship & Economic Mobility Task Force in the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) in the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development. She is also on the Board of Directors of Pacific Community Ventures, Mission Economic Development Agency, and the Association for Enterprise Opportunity. She previously served on the Pennsylvania Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs, the Berks County Latino Chamber of Commerce board, and the Kutztown University Foundation board.



CECILIA JACOBSEN

Cecilia Jacobsen is Chief People, Culture, & Strategy at Democracy Forward. Cecilia joined Democracy Forward in 2023 with more than 17 years experience in the public and private sector as a people and program leader. She brings strategic and analytical thinking as well as a robust background in project management, resource allocation, and organizational development and training. Most recently, Cecilia spent 5 years with a global technology company, serving as Chief of Staff & Senior Adviser for HR Strategy to the Chief of People and Culture, developing cross-functional programs to support the employee base and achieve business objectives. Prior to her corporate experience, she worked as a civil servant in the US Government, including serving in President Barack Obama's White House.



CORRINE HENDRICKSON

Ms. Corrine Hendrickson owned and operated Corrine's Little Explorers Family Child Care Center in New Glarus, WI for 18 years. She holds a BS in Elementary Education PreK-6 from UW-Whitewater, an Infant Early Childhood Family Mental Health Master's Certificate from UW Madison (2023), and a Masters in Early Childhood Education Policy (2025) with an emphasis in special education. She co-founded Wisconsin Early Childhood Action Needed to empower Wisconsinites in 2020, which has grown to around 2500 members, and is currently working for Main Street Action as an organizer. She is committed to community building and advocating for children and families and has participated in multiple local, state, and national panels discussing the importance of child care as early care and education, workforce development, and why it is integral to the success of communities. She appeared as a witness for the Feb 28, 2023 House Business Small Committee hearing "From Something to Nothing: The American Dream" She lives in New Glarus with her husband of 22 years and two teenage sons.



DANIEL MCGRATH

Dan McGrath is Senior Oversight Counsel at Democracy Forward.

Dan most recently served as a senior counsel in the Office of the Solicitor in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Dan coordinated DOL's responses to congressional oversight requests and subpoenas, and served as front office counsel for several program and issue areas, including unemployment insurance, recent administrative law decisions, and immigration-related matters. Prior to DOL, he served as a counsel on the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis led by Rep. Jim Clyburn. Dan led oversight investigations of economic programs implemented to address the pandemic's fallout and private sector actors' conduct during the crisis. He earlier served as lead counsel for federal investigations at American Oversight, where he litigated public records cases to advance investigations of government malfeasance.

Dan started his legal career as a litigation associate at the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, and previously taught high school social studies at St. Francis Indian School on Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. He received his law degree cum laude from Harvard Law School and his undergraduate degree magna cum laude from Georgetown University.



DIANE A. SELTZER

Diane A. Seltzer represents employers and employees in all aspects of employment law and employment litigation. From 2004 through 2024, she provided annual employment law training to the judicial law clerks for the United States District Court of Maryland, and in 2015, the Judges of that Court presented her with their Exceptional Service Award.

In October 2024, she completed her 12th year of service on the D.C. Bar's Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Committee, for which she served as Chair (2023-2024, 2022-2023, 2016-2017), Vice Chair (2015-2016), and Committee member (2012-2015, 2018-2022). She frequently teaches CLE courses for the D.C. Bar.

In addition to her private practice, Diane was an Adjunct Professor of Law at American University, Washington College of Law, in Washington, DC, from 2003-2021. She developed and in 2020-2021 taught the Human Resources Compliance course for the Master of Legal Studies program. She has taught J.D. students Employment Discrimination as well as Employment Law: The Employment Relationship.

Diane has spoken nationally and locally at various programs on employment law and has appeared as a guest on and in national and local media programs and publications.

Diane is a 1991 graduate of American University's Washington College of Law, where she served on Law Review. She received her B.A. in Sociology, cum laude, from Tufts University in 1988.

She clerked for Judge Frederick C. Wright III, Judge John P. Corderman, and Judge Daniel Moylan of the Circuit Court of Maryland for Washington County after graduation.



DOLORES HUERTA

Dolores Huerta is a pioneering American labor leader and civil rights activist best known for co-founding the National Farm Workers Association (now United Farm Workers, UFW) alongside César Chávez in 1962. Born in 1930 in Dawson, New Mexico, and raised in Stockton, California, Huerta was influenced early on by her mother’s entrepreneurial and community-driven spirit. She began her activism with the Community Service Organization, where she led voter registration drives and advocated for economic and social justice. As UFW’s principal legislative advocate, Huerta was instrumental in securing key victories for farm workers, including disability insurance and the landmark 1975 California Agricultural Labor Relations Act. Her leadership extended into national politics, supporting figures such as Robert F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden. A staunch feminist, Huerta worked closely with Gloria Steinem and led campaigns to increase Latina political participation. She endured a near-fatal police assault in 1988 while protesting, which catalyzed policy reform on crowd control in San Francisco. In 2002, she established the Dolores Huerta Foundation, which focuses on grassroots organizing, civic engagement, and policy advocacy in underserved communities. Recognized nationally and internationally, Huerta has received numerous honors, including the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012. She continues to speak and organize across the U.S., championing labor rights, education, and gender equity, and remains a vital voice in American social justice movements.



DOUG JONES

Senator Doug Jones represented Alabama in the U.S. Senate from 2018 to 2021, serving on the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Aging; Homeland Security; and Armed Services Committees. A former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, Jones gained national recognition for prosecuting two of the Ku Klux Klan members responsible for the 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church, bringing long-overdue justice in a historic civil rights case. Earlier in his career, he served as staff counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. Jones began his legal career after earning his J.D. from Cumberland School of Law at Samford University. As a senator, he was widely regarded as one of the most bipartisan members of Congress, with 25 bipartisan bills signed into law in three years. His legislative accomplishments include securing permanent funding for HBCUs, ending the military widow’s tax, expanding broadband in rural areas, and advancing civil rights cold case investigations. He was also a vocal advocate for expanding Medicaid, improving education, and promoting social and racial justice. In 2019 and 2020, he led a bipartisan Senate reading of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” In 2021, he joined the Center for American Progress as a Distinguished Senior Fellow and became Counsel in the Government Relations and White Collar divisions of ArentFox, alongside former lawmakers including Senator Byron Dorgan and Representative Phil English.



ELENA GOLDSTEIN

Elena Goldstein is a Legal Director at Democracy Forward. Prior to joining DF, Elena served as the Deputy Solicitor of Labor in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). As the Deputy Solicitor of Labor, Elena helped to lead DOL's 650-person legal office, overseeing numerous litigation, regulatory, and policy matters relating to the rights of workers, job-seekers, and retirees in the United States. Immediately prior to serving as the Deputy Solicitor of Labor, Elena worked as Deputy Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau in the New York State Office of the Attorney General, where she was a lead counsel in numerous cases challenging federal executive and agency actions in the forty-fifth Presidential administration and supervised a wide range of civil rights matters. Elena's career also includes nine years as a senior trial attorney in DOL's Office of the Solicitor, litigating cases involving minimum wage and overtime laws, workplace safety, whistleblower statutes, and a variety of other labor and employment laws. Earlier in her career, she worked as a Skadden Fellow and senior staff attorney at the New York Legal Assistance Group, where she helped to start a workers' rights project focusing on the rights of low-wage and immigrant workers, and as third grade teacher at Public School 152 in New York City. Elena served as a law clerk for the Honorable Jed S. Rakoff in the Southern District of New York and the Honorable Robert A. Katzmann on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. She graduated from the University of Michigan and Harvard Law School.



EUGENE DANIELS

Eugene Daniels is a distinguished journalist currently serving as a Senior Washington Correspondent for MS NOW (formerly MSNBC) and the co-host of The Weekend.

He joined MS NOW full-time in early 2025, having previously contributed to the network during his time as White House Correspondent at Politico and co-author of the influential Playbook newsletter. During his time at Politico, Daniels covered the midterms, the Democratic presidential primary, and the general election through print, video, journalism, and podcasts. During the country's reckoning with race in 2020, Daniels moderated Politico's "Confronting Inequality" Town Hall series that examined how inequities in policing, housing, healthcare, education, and employment permeate and plague the United States. He recently completed his term as president of the White House Correspondents' Association.

Prior to Politico, Daniels covered elections and national politics as a political reporter at Newsy, after starting his career in local television in Colorado Springs. As an engaging moderator and compelling keynote speaker, Daniels shares his unparalleled perspective on culture and diversity, what's to come in U.S. politics and policy, and how the media and voters are making sense of the headlines.



TX STATE REP. GENE WU

State Representative Gene Wu proudly serves the people of District 137 in the Texas House. Prior to being elected in 2012, he served as a prosecutor in the Harris County District Attorney's Office, where he sought justice for thousands of crime victims. Gene is currently an attorney in private practice.

Since being elected State Representative, Gene has maintained a focus on improving the lives of Texas children. Gene has authored numerous pieces of legislation supporting greater justice for juveniles; specifically fighting the school to prison pipeline and passing comprehensive CPS reform. Gene has also been appointed to the Texas Access to Justice Commission, and the Texas State Child Fatality Review Team.

Now in his 7th term, Gene has been appointed Vice Chair of the House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence. He also serves on the House Permanent Standing Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, the Committee on Redistricting, and on the Appropriations Committee. Outside his legislative work, Gene remains active and involved in the Houston community. Gene currently serves on community advocacy organization boards such as the OCA-Greater Houston Advisory Board, the Chinese Community Center Advisory Board, and the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Centers Advisory Committee. As an attorney, Gene serves as a Guardian Ad-Litem representing minors in court in either criminal or CPS cases. Additionally, Gene is passionate in supporting young people becoming active in civic roles, and is proud advocate for the AAPI community across Texas and the nation.



DR. GEORGES BENJAMIN

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, is a well-known health policy leader, practitioner, and administrator. He currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the American Public Health Association, the nation's oldest and largest organization of public health professionals. He is a former Secretary for Health for the state of Maryland where he ran the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, a \$4.5 billion agency. Dr. Benjamin is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He is board-certified in internal medicine, a Master of the American College of Physicians, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, a fellow emeritus of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine. At APHA, he serves as the publisher for APHA Press, the American Journal of Public Health and The Nation's Health newspaper. In addition, he sits on the boards of Research!America (Vice chair) and the Environmental Defense Fund.



H HARRIS

H Harris is a multi-hyphenate artist, educator, facilitator, and cultural equity consultant. He often works at the intersection of theater, education, social justice, and community engagement. Through keynote addresses and workshops, H. Adam specializes in fostering dialogue on identity, art, and community issues. He has served as an emcee for the O’Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law, the City of Costa Mesa, and the MLK Holiday Breakfast, hosted by General Mills and the United Negro College Fund. His former facilitation clients include the Citizens League, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Turnaround Arts at the Kennedy Center, and the Minnesota League of Women Voters. In addition to directing theatrical productions at South Coast Repertory, Great River Shakespeare Festival, Jungle Theater, Chance Theater, and NC Black Repertory, he has directed readings and development workshops with The Old Globe, the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, and the National Black Theater. Onstage, he has performed with the Guthrie Theater, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Penumbra Theatre Company, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra. H. Adam is currently the Artistic & Audience Engagement Associate at South Coast Repertory and the Board Chair Emeritus of Ten Thousand Things Theatre Company. More at hadamharris.com



HARDY MERRIMAN

For over 20 years, Hardy Merriman has focused on pro-democracy movements fighting authoritarian governments and democratic backsliding around the world. He is former president of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC), led the Fostering Fourth Democratic Wave project as a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and served as a senior technical advisor to USAID’s Powered by the People program, among other roles. He presents widely and has written numerous publications including *Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence (HOPE)* (2024), *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A Playbook for Countering the Authoritarian Threat* (2023), *We Need People Power to Address a World in Peril* (2023), and *Hold the Line: A Guide to Defending Democracy* (2020).



IVANA HALL

Ivana started her career fundraising and organizing at an HIV/AIDS non-profit in her home town of Dallas, Texas. She recently joined the non-partisan women’s organization Red, Wine, and Blue that works to combat extremism across the country through relational organizing as the Head of State Programs. Prior to RWB, Ivana worked on electoral campaigns for ten years mostly running organizing programs in critical states some of those include serving as the National Organizing Director for western states on the Harris Walz 2024 campaign, Deputy Campaigns Director at the Virginia Senate Democratic Caucus in 2023, Organizing Director for Pennsylvania in 2020 for the Biden Harris Campaign, and Deputy Coordinated Campaign Director in 2019 for the Virginia Democratic Party. Her other work includes serving as a part-time professor at the University of Richmond’s online Campaign Management Program since the spring of 2022, as she believes it’s critical to train and build up the next generation of campaign workers.



US REP. JAMIE RASKIN

Rep. Raskin represents Maryland's 8th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives and was sworn into his fifth Term at the start of the 119th Congress on January 6, 2025.

He was chosen by the Democratic Caucus to be the Ranking Member of the House Committee on the Judiciary in the 119th Congress. He previously served as the Ranking Member on the Oversight Committee.

After the violent insurrection at the Capitol in January 2021, then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi appointed Rep. Raskin as the lead impeachment manager in the second impeachment trial of former president Donald Trump, the fourth Member of Congress to serve as a lead presidential impeachment manager in American history. It ended in the most sweeping bipartisan vote to convict an impeached president in our history, 57-43, still short of the constitutional threshold.

Rep. Raskin was subsequently appointed to serve on the bipartisan Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol and led its legal and constitutional team.



GOV. JANET MILLS

Janet Trafton Mills was sworn in as the 75th Governor of Maine on January 2, 2019. Governor Mills is the first woman governor of Maine. In her historic victories, she earned more votes than any governor in Maine history and is the first governor since 1970 to be elected with a majority of the vote for both terms in office.

As Governor, she led Maine through a global pandemic with nation-leading results, including one of the highest vaccination rates and one of the lowest death rates in the country, protecting the lives and livelihoods of Maine people.

Under her leadership, Maine's GDP has experienced the strongest GDP growth in New England and outperformed the economic growth of larger states like California, New York, and Virginia. In fact, Maine has experienced more economic growth over the last four years than it did in the preceding fifteen.

She has expanded health care to more than 100,000 Maine people, cut the uninsured rate by more than any other state in the nation, fully funded schools for the first time in Maine history, raised the minimum teacher salary, delivered free community college, cut taxes for Maine retirees, increased the Rainy Day Fund to more than \$900 million, and provided significant tax relief for Maine people, among many other bipartisan accomplishments.

Through her Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, she is focused on addressing Maine's longstanding workforce shortage, investing millions of dollars workforce supports including education and training, childcare, housing and healthcare, and broadband expansion.



US REP. JASON CROW

Congressman Jason Crow represents Colorado’s Sixth Congressional District, encompassing Aurora and parts of Arapahoe, Adams, and Douglas Counties.

Former Army Ranger and Bronze Star recipient Jason Crow grew up working class — he worked minimum-wage jobs during high school and enlisted in the National Guard and worked construction to help pay his way through college.

After graduating, Jason joined the active duty Army and served in the Army’s storied 82nd Airborne Division and in the elite 75th Ranger Regiment, deploying to both Iraq and Afghanistan. Even when he rose to the rank of Captain, Jason always remembered what it was like to march in the boots of an Army private. For Jason, this is the essence of servant leadership — always putting the needs of those you lead ahead of your own — and it continues to drive his approach today.

When Jason returned home, he looked for ways to continue to give back. Jason struggled to get his veterans benefits and knew others were having similar challenges transitioning from service to civilian life so he went to work helping veterans across Colorado. As an attorney, Jason was named Denver’s Pro-bono Lawyer of the Year for work helping service members transition from military to civilian life.

Now Jason has taken his servant leadership to Congress where he represents Colorado’s 6th Congressional District and serves on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and House Armed Services Committee, on which he is the Ranking Democrat of the Intelligence and Special Operations Subcommittee.

Whether combatting the climate crisis, creating better, higher-paying jobs for hardworking families, or preventing gun violence, Jason is focused on putting Colorado and our country ahead of politics and partisanship.



JESSE RODRIGUEZ

Jesse Rodriguez is the Vice President for Booking & Editorial at MSNBC, playing a pivotal role in shaping the channel’s content across various programs and making MSNBC the premier destination for news-making guests. In this capacity, he oversees guest appearances on Morning Joe, the MSNBC Reports hours, and primetime programming. He also coordinates the editorial focus for the day’s coverage on the network and is involved in planning network specials and managing the channel’s coverage during significant events, breaking news & election broadcasts.

Jesse began at NBC News as an assignment editor in 2007. He oversaw guest booking at Morning Joe for several years, and most recently was Director of Booking for MSNBC. He has overseen broadcasts from both Republican and Democratic conventions, breaking significant news stories like Fidel Castro’s transfer of power, and earning accolades such as the Edward R. Murrow award for “outstanding coverage” of the January 6th Capitol Riot on MSNBC, where he spent 17 hours in the control room and booked the first live interview by a member of congress as the capitol was being evacuated.

Jesse attended South Miami Senior High School’s magnet program for broadcast journalism and Florida International University, where he studied International Relations while working at WSVN-TV and WFOR-TV in Miami as a writer and assignment editor. He is a longtime member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists, reflecting his commitment to diversity and inclusivity in journalism.



JESSICA FLOYD

Jess Floyd is the Executive Director of The Hub Project where she leads the entire organization in its mission, running large-scale issue advocacy campaigns related to protecting our democracy, creating a fair economy, and fighting for reproductive rights. Under Jess' leadership. The Hub Project works with coalitions, hundreds of local organizations, individual storytellers, and a community of influencers and content creators to influence decision makers and break through the fractured media ecosystem with authentic messengers. Jess previously worked at The Hub Project as the Managing Director of Campaigns, building the State Accountability Project — a multi-year issue advocacy and accountability program focused on health care and taxes in target states and districts. Prior to her time at The Hub Project, Jess was the President of American Bridge, served as the Deputy Director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's Independent Expenditure Program, managed Rob Barber's successful congressional campaign in Arizona, served as Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords' political director, and worked both as a Congressional District Director and in various roles in New York State government. In 2021, she was named one of the American Association of Political Consultants' 40 under 40.



JODIE MORSE

Jodie Morse serves as the Chief Program and Strategy Officer and Senior Counselor where she is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, and evaluation of cross-departmental work by coordinating with stakeholders to drive impactful outcomes and continuous improvement across all program areas. She also supports high-level litigation strategy. Prior to joining Democracy Forward, Jodie served as Deputy Associate Attorney General at the Department of Justice, where she helped to oversee the Civil Division, the Office of Information Policy, and the Tax Division. She also served as the Executive Director of the Reproductive Rights Task Force, where she led day-to-day the Department's work to safeguard reproductive freedoms under federal law following the Dobbs decision. Jodie earned a Juris Doctorate from New York University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from Yale University.



JOE PERTICONE

Joe Perticone is a national political reporter at The Bulwark, covering Congress, campaigns, and influence.



RABBI JONAH DOV PESNER

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner (he/him) serves as the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and has led the Religious Action Center since 2015. Rabbi Pesner also serves as Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism, a position to which he was appointed in 2011. Named one of the most influential rabbis in America by Newsweek magazine, he is an inspirational leader and tireless advocate for social justice.

Rabbi Pesner's work focuses on encouraging Jewish communities to reach across lines of race, class, and faith while campaigning for social justice. In 2006, he founded Just Congregations (now incorporated into the Religious Action Center), which engaged clergy, professional, and volunteer leaders in interfaith social justice efforts. Rabbi Pesner was a primary leader in the Massachusetts campaign for health care access that has provided coverage to thousands and became a model for nationwide reform. Over the course of his career, he has also led and supported campaigns for racial justice, economic opportunity, immigration reform, LGBTQ+ equality, human rights, and a variety of other causes. He is dedicated to building bridges to collectively confront antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate.

Rabbi Pesner is a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, speaks regularly on college campuses, has trained students on all four campuses of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and gives speeches in interfaith and secular venues all over the world. Rabbi Pesner serves as a board member of the NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, and the New England Center for Children. He is a member of the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council for the Department of Homeland Security, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Solidarity Council on Racial Equity and the Leadership Team of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable. He has served as a scholar for the Wexner Foundation, The Chautauqua Institution, American Jewish World Service, the Nexus USA Summit, and Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner (he/him) serves as the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and the Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism, the largest and most diverse denomination in Jewish life. Named one of the most influential rabbis in America by Newsweek magazine, he is an inspirational leader and tireless advocate for social justice in the United States, Israel, and across the world.

Rabbi Pesner has spent decades working with Jewish communities on behalf of social justice. Reaching across lines of race, class, and faith, Rabbi Pesner helps build bridges to collectively confront antisemitism and all forms of hate. Over the course of his career, he has led and supported campaigns for racial justice, economic opportunity, immigration reform, LGBTQ+ equality, human rights, and a variety of other causes. He has been a tireless advocate for Israel as a secure, Jewish, democratic state. He is widely published and makes regular media appearances.

Rabbi Pesner has served as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, speaks regularly on college campuses, has trained students on all four campuses of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and gives speeches in interfaith and secular venues all over the world. Rabbi Pesner serves as a board member of the NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the New England Center for Children. He formerly served as a member of the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council for the Department of Homeland Security, and is currently a member of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Solidarity Council on Racial Equity and the Leadership Team of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable. He has served as a scholar for the Wexner Foundation, The Chautauqua Institution, American Jewish World Service, the Nexus USA Summit, and Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

Ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1997, Rabbi Pesner was a congregational rabbi at Temple Israel in Boston, Massachusetts and at Temple Israel in Westport, Connecticut. A graduate of Wesleyan University and the Bronx High School of Science, Rabbi Pesner is married to Dana S. Gershon, an attorney. They have four daughters: Juliet, Noa, Bobbie, and Cate.



JORDAN KLEPPER

Jordan Klepper is perhaps best known for his work with The Daily Show and his multiple Emmy-nominated specials focusing on the political world. From covering the gun safety debate (Jordan Klepper Solves Guns) to his docuseries on the world of activism (Klepper on Comedy Central), Jordan has witnessed an insurrection, capsized a boat with pipeline protestors, interviewed a President and been arrested and locked up in Fulton County Jail. He also travels the globe with his segment “Fingers The Pulse” which has racked up hundreds of millions of views.

Klepper wrote, starred in, and executive produced Jordan Klepper Fingers the Pulse: Into The MagaVerse, Fingers The Midterms, (the most watched special on Comedy Central), and Hungary for Democracy, the latter of which garnered him a Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in TV Political Journalism. He executive produced and hosted The Opposition and Klepper on Comedy Central, which was called “A fresh, powerful interpretation of news” by the Detroit Free Press.

In addition to being a correspondent on the Peabody Award Winning Daily Show for nearly a decade, he’s branched out into the podcast space co-hosting StarTalk with Neil deGrasse Tyson, co-hosting Kasich and Klepper with former Governor John Kasich as well as the Webby award-winning Fingers The Conspiracy which took a deep dive into the world of conspiracy. Beyond his work in comedy, Klepper has chronicled his experiences in the world of politics from essays on CBS Morning to Op-Ed’s in the Boston Globe. He’s also been seen on CNN, MSNBC, Showtime’s The Circus, HBO’s Night of Too Many Stars, Netflix’s The Who’s Who Show and voices Pete on Disney’s The Ghost and Molly McGee.



JULIA SZYBALA

Julia Szybala is Senior Director of Oversight, Regulatory Affairs, and Strategic Initiatives at Democracy Forward.

Before joining Democracy Forward, Julia spent a decade at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, where she most recently served as Assistant General Counsel for Oversight. In her time at the Bureau, Julia managed the agency’s responses to investigations and oversight inquiries from Congress, the Government Accountability Office, and the Inspector General, and helped agency leaders across multiple administrations navigate complex legal and policy issues with an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and good governance. Julia began her career in private practice, where she focused on regulatory compliance and internal investigations.

Julia earned her B.A. from Virginia Tech and her J.D. from Columbia Law School. She is admitted to practice in New York and Washington, D.C.



KYLE TIBBS JONES

Kyle Tibbs Jones is Co-Founder and Editor at The Bitter Southerner, the James Beard Award-winning media brand telling stories with its print magazine, books, podcast, record label and commerce.

At The BS, Kyle oversees the vision, voice, editorial and creative for the brand. She also hosts the podcast, “Batch” when it’s not on hiatus. Kyle is the author of *Your Heart Is Your Home*, The Bitter Southerner’s first children’s book.

Always anchored in storytelling, her career path has meandered through advertising, PR, creative direction and film. Kyle held creative director roles for companies including WSB-TV and Turner Broadcasting and PR roles at Sea Island Resorts and AMPR in NYC. Alongside her co-founders in 2013, Kyle started The Bitter Southerner, now on a mission to make America, and the world, a better place. Kyle lives in Athens, GA.



MAYOR LEE HARRIS

Mayor Lee Harris was sworn in as the 6th Mayor of Shelby County, Tennessee in 2018 after winning 55% of the vote in a historic election cycle. He was re-elected in 2022 with 58%. As chief elected official of one of the South’s largest local governments, Mayor Harris oversees more than 5,000 employees, a \$1.6 billion operating budget, and services for over one million residents.

Since taking office, Mayor Harris has advanced an agenda centered on families, public safety, and climate action. His administration expanded access to Pre-K, established paid family leave for county employees, enacted a living wage requirement, and adopted policies to phase out fossil-fueled fleet vehicles. He launched the 901 Student Passport to provide free access to cultural institutions for local students and advanced justice reforms including Ban the Box, Work to Break the Cycle, and limits on military equipment transfers to law enforcement.

Early in his second term, Mayor Harris secured financing for two new Memphis high schools—the first built in over a decade—and led efforts to rebuild Regional One, West Tennessee’s only public hospital, one of the largest infrastructure investments in county history.

Before becoming mayor, Harris served on the Memphis City Council and in the Tennessee State Senate, where he became the youngest senator at the time and later the first African American Senate Minority Leader. His legislative work included criminal justice reform, lead-in-water notification protections, and expanded community college scholarships for students with learning disabilities.

A graduate of Memphis public schools, Mayor Harris attended Morehouse College on scholarship and earned his law degree from Yale Law School. He later spent 14 years as a professor at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphrey School of Law, becoming its first African American tenured full professor.



NY AG LETITIA JAMES

Letitia "Tish" James is the 67th Attorney General for the State of New York. With decades of experience and a long record of achievements, she is a powerful, effective attorney and lifelong public servant. When she was elected in 2018, she became the first woman of color to hold statewide office in New York and the first woman to be elected Attorney General.

In her first term, Attorney General James focused on protecting vulnerable New York residents and ensuring that individuals or companies that broke state laws were held accountable. She secured more than \$7.5 billion for New York from those who broke state laws and took advantage of New Yorkers, including more than \$2.5 billion from opioid manufacturers and distributors for their roles in the opioid epidemic. Under her leadership, the Office of the Attorney General helped remove more than 4,000 guns from New York communities, took down dozens of dangerous drug and gun trafficking rings throughout the state, and took legal action to stop the proliferation of ghost guns.

Attorney General James took on predatory landlords who harassed tenants and endangered children by violating New York's lead paint laws. She protected New Yorkers' health and the state's natural resources by going after polluters and companies that flouted environmental protection laws. Attorney General James stood up for vulnerable populations by going all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court to stop a question about citizenship from being added to the census and successfully protecting DACA.

She has been a national leader in the fight to defend access to reproductive health care, leading dozens of legal actions across the country to protect and expand access to this lifesaving care.



LISA TUCKER

Lisa A. Tucker is a Professor of Law at the Thomas R. Kline School of Law, where she has been a member of the faculty since 2007. Her scholarship focuses on the "underdogs" in family law, or those family members whose interests are underrecognized, undervalued, and underrepresented. Professor Tucker is also an expert on the United States Supreme Court and has published numerous articles in scholarly journals and the mainstream media about the Court as an institution. Her work has been published in the Duke Law Journal, the Boston University Law Review, the Washington University Law Review, the North Carolina Law Review, the Florida Law Review, the Indiana Law Journal, the BYU Law Review, the University of Chicago Law Review Online, the Georgetown Law Journal Online, and many more.

Professor Tucker is the co-founder of We Hold These Truths, a groundbreaking, nationwide effort to promote freedom, equality, and democracy by providing Americans with clear, reliable, and accessible facts about the protections provided under the U.S. Constitution for all people and the work required to safeguard our freedoms and nation's ideals.



MAGGIE O'NEILL

Maggie O'Neill is a creative visionary, artist and entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience shaping the cultural and design landscape of Washington, D.C. She co-founded SWATCHROOM in 2013, leading the creation of immersive environments for over 80 restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, and commercial spaces. Today, she is committed to designing spaces and creating experiences through art that foster engagement, connection and civic engagement.

Maggie's signature pop-impressionist artwork is collected across the U.S. and internationally, and she collaborates with brands, cultural institutions, and communities to create impactful public art, murals, and immersive experiences. Maggie's portfolio includes major projects such as the renovation of the historic Willard Hotel, international collaborations in Morocco, and a wide range of commercial and hospitality spaces. She has been recognized with the 2024 Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in the Visual Arts, and serves as a Commissioner for the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *The Washington Post*, *Modern Luxury*, *ABC*, and *NBC*. Maggie continues to lead with bold creativity, bridging the worlds of design, activism, and cultural impact—one vibrant space at a time.

Maggie's latest endeavor as an activist and founder of the Vote For Your Daughter campaign, the arts nonprofit *Our Daughter's Futures Fund*, and the FOREVER FEARLESS exhibition reflects her commitment to civic engagement and social change. Both organizations leverage the power of art and artist networks with a grassroots approach inspiring action and raising awareness to educate American voters on critical issues that directly impact women and girls.



MAJU VARGHESE

Maju Varghese is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Democracy Security Project. He most recently was a Principal with NEWCO Strategies, a strategic consulting firm, supporting leaders and teams across multiple sectors through strategic planning, coaching, facilitation and training. Maju previously served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the National Endowment for Democracy. Prior to that, Maju served as Deputy Assistant to President Biden and Director of the White House Military Office. Before joining the Biden administration, Maju was Executive Director of the 59th Presidential Inaugural Committees and Chief Operating Officer and Senior Advisor on the Biden Campaign in 2020. Previously in his career, Maju was a senior member of President Obama's staff, serving as Assistant to the President for Management and Administration. He previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Advance. Prior to his service in government, Maju practiced law in New York.

The son of immigrants from Kerala, India, Maju is an alumnus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Economics, and the Maurice A. Dean School of Law at Hofstra University, where he earned his Juris Doctor.



BISHOP MARIANN EDGAR BUDDE

Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde serves as spiritual leader for the Episcopal congregations and schools in the District of Columbia and four Maryland counties that comprise the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. The first woman elected to this position, she also serves as the chair of the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation which oversees the ministries of the Washington National Cathedral and Cathedral schools. Bishop Budde is an advocate and organizer in support of justice concerns, including racial equity, gun violence prevention, immigration reform, the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons, and the care of creation. Bishop Budde was consecrated as the ninth bishop of Washington in November 2011. Prior to her election, she served for 18 years as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Minneapolis. She earned a B.A. in history at the University of Rochester, graduating magna cum laude. She earned both a Masters in Divinity (1989) and Doctor of Ministry (2008) from Virginia Theological Seminary. She is the author of three books; the most recent, *How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*, was published in 2023.



MARIEL SÁEZ

Mariel Sáez is a seasoned public affairs strategist with experience at the highest levels of government and a deep understanding of the media landscape that she brings to her work at SKDK. At the firm, she is co-lead of the Economic Policy Practice. She leads major public affairs campaigns for her clients, and she has extensive experience running communications strategies for major events, including leading the surrogate booking operation for the 2024 Democratic National Convention.

Prior to joining SKDK, Mariel served as director of broadcast media on President Biden's White House communications team. In that role, she acted as the Administration's point person for major television networks, radio, podcasts, and virtual events. Before her role at the White House, she served as deputy communications director for the Presidential Inaugural Committee and on the communications team for the 2020 Biden-Harris presidential campaign.

Mariel spent over a decade working on Capitol Hill for House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer. She served in a variety of roles in his office, including deputy communications director and his national spokesperson on a wide range of issues before Congress, including the economy, appropriations, health care, and national security.

Originally from Maryland, Mariel earned a bachelor's degree in economics at St. Mary's College of Maryland.



MARK DEL MONTE

Mark Del Monte, JD serves as the CEO/Executive Vice President of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In this capacity, Del Monte leads a strong executive team for the organization which serves 67,000 pediatrician, pediatric medical subspecialist, and pediatric surgical specialist members. Prior to this role, Del Monte served as the AAP's Chief Deputy and Senior Vice President for Advocacy and External Affairs where he directed the organization's communications, public relations and advocacy activities.

Before joining the AAP's Washington, DC office in 2005, Del Monte served as Director of Policy and Government Affairs for the AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families, a national organization advocating for children and families with HIV/AIDS. Del Monte began his career working as a lawyer in his home state of California, providing direct legal services to low-income children and families affected by HIV.

Del Monte holds a law degree from the University of California (Berkeley) and a bachelor's degree in economics from Gonzaga University.



MELISSA SCHWARTZ

Melissa Schwartz is the Chief Public Affairs and Policy Officer at Democracy Forward.

Melissa has spent 25 years at the intersection of communications and public policy, with experience in the federal government, the private sector, and at nonprofit organizations. She spent more than a decade in the federal government, at the U.S. Departments of the Interior and Justice, and in the office of U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski. She served from the first to the last day of the Biden-Harris administration in roles including Senior Counselor to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Chief of Staff to Acting Deputy Secretary Laura Daniel-Davis, and as the agency's Communications Director.

Melissa has specialized expertise in crisis and litigation communications. At the Justice Department during the Obama administration, her portfolio included helping to rebuild the working relationship with the U.S. Attorney community following political firings by the Bush administration. She was then tapped to manage communications and congressional inquiries as Deputy Chief of Staff for the bureau at the Interior Department responsible for the regulation and oversight of offshore drilling in U.S. waters immediately following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. She also served as Chief Operating Officer at The Bromwich Group for almost nine years and managed the firm's crisis communications practice, where clients included former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe and Dr. Christine Blasey Ford.

Melissa is an Adjunct Faculty member at Johns Hopkins University's Master of Arts in Communication program and a Senior Affiliate Instructor for the University of Washington's Communication Leadership graduate program. She earned her M.A. in Political Communications from Johns Hopkins University and B.A. in American Studies from the University of California, Berkeley.



MELISSA TOUFANIAN

Melissa Toufanian is the Managing Director of Navigator Research. She leads the team in developing and distributing winning messages and polling on the most pressing issues of the moment. Melissa previously served at the U.S. Department of State in the Biden and Obama administrations. She accompanied the Secretary and State Department Spokesperson on official travel to more than 70 countries. Melissa also served in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, focusing on research and public outreach related to refugee resettlement. Additionally, she's an alum of the United Nations Foundation, National Security Action, the Hill, and a successful 2018 congressional campaign. A native of upstate New York, Melissa holds a MS from Georgetown University and a BA from the George Washington University.



MICHAEL GAVIN

Michael H. Gavin is the president of Delta College (MI). He is the author of two books; the most recent, *The New White Nationalism in Politics and Higher Education*, was released in 2020, and is in paperback as of spring 2023. He leads a national coalition of college presidents and higher education leaders in resisting anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) legislation called Education for All.



MICHAEL MARTINEZ

Michael (Mike) Ceja Martinez is the Managing Counsel of Civil Service Strong at Democracy Forward.

Mike has extensive Government experience in both the career and political civil service, in addition to his litigation experience in private practice. He served most recently as the Deputy General Counsel at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Mike helped lead the Office of the General Counsel and provided policy leadership on dozens of regulations impacting the 2.3 million Federal civil servants in close coordination with OPM leadership, the White House, and the Office of Management and Budget. Mike was central in the administration's efforts to protect the civil service and merit system principles from politicization. He was also selected to the President's Leadership Workshop, a White House program to develop and deepen the management and executive experience of senior political appointees.

Immediately prior to his position at OPM, Mike served as Chief of Staff and Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General at U.S. Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division, where he assisted the Assistant Attorney General with managing the Division and its 600 employees. He worked closely with the Offices of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, and Associate Attorney General on matters important to the Division, including the creation and rollout of DOJ's inaugural Office of Environmental Justice.

Mike formerly served as a DOJ trial attorney and as a litigator at Steptoe & Johnson LLP. He clerked for the Honorable S. James Otero of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California and the Honorable Philip R. Martinez of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas.



R. MICHAEL MCAFEE

Dr. Michael McAfee is Chief Executive Officer of PolicyLink. In 2018, after serving as the inaugural director of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink, he became the President and CEO. His results-driven leadership, deep knowledge of organizational development, and commitment to the nation's most underserved populations made him the clear choice to succeed founder Angela Glover Blackwell.

At PolicyLink, Michael secured Promise Neighborhoods as a permanent federal program, improved outcomes for more than 300,000 children, and helped channel billions of dollars into neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. He was also instrumental in launching the organization's corporate racial equity portfolio, including the first comprehensive tool to help companies embed equity throughout their value chains. Michael carries forward the PolicyLink mission to realize equity: just and fair inclusion so all people can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Before PolicyLink, Michael served in the Chicago Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, managing a \$450 million housing, community, and economic development portfolio that created 3,000 affordable homes, 5,000 jobs, and expanded services for 200,000 families. Before his public service, Michael was the director of community leadership for The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, where he helped raise \$121 million from individual donors—earning national recognition from the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

Dr. Michael McAfee serves on multiple boards and is a U.S. Army veteran. He was a Dean's Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Harvard. He earned his Ed.D. in human and organizational learning from George Washington University and a certificate from Harvard's Executive Program in Public Management. A sought-after speaker and writer, he has appeared in multiple publications and earned many awards. In 2025, he was named an honoree of the *NonProfit Times' Power & Influence Top 50*.



MICHAEL SHIFTER

Michael Shifter is former president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a leading policy forum on Western Hemisphere affairs based in Washington, DC. Shifter held senior positions at the Dialogue for nearly three decades, including a dozen, until April 2022, as president. He currently serves as senior fellow at the organization. Prior to joining the Dialogue, Shifter directed the Latin American and Caribbean program at the National Endowment for Democracy and, before that, the Ford Foundation's governance and human rights program in the Andean region and Southern Cone, where he was based, first, in Lima, Peru and then in Santiago, Chile. In the 1980s, he was a representative in Brazil with the Inter-American Foundation, and also worked at the Woodrow Wilson Center's Latin American Program.

Since 1993, Shifter has been an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, where he teaches Latin American politics. In 2023, he joined the part-time faculty at George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs. Shifter is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Latin American Studies Association and is a contributing editor of *Current History*. He is currently a board member of InSight Crime and serves on the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch/Americas Division. He was previously on the board of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the Social Science Foundation of the Graduate School of International Relations at the University of Denver.

Shifter graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude from Oberlin College and holds a MA in sociology from Harvard University, where he taught Latin American development and politics for four years. He has been awarded decorations by the Colombian, Spanish and Peruvian governments.



DR. MICHELE GOODWIN

Michele Goodwin is the Linda D. & Timothy J. O’Neill Professor of Constitutional Law and Global Health Policy and Faculty Director of the O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown Law. A leading authority on constitutional law, health policy, bioethics, and civil liberties, her scholarship has been featured in top law reviews and cited by courts, legislators, and national media. She is the author/editor of six books, including *Policing The Womb*, and has directed the first ABA-accredited health law program and established the first law center focused on race and bioethics. Dr. Goodwin is also the Executive Producer of *Ms. Studios* and host of the podcast *On the Issues with Michele Goodwin*. She has testified before Congress and state legislatures on a range of issues, including reproductive rights and public health, and has authored amicus briefs for the U.S. Supreme Court and federal appellate courts. Her honors include the 2025 Steven M. Polan Fellowship in Constitutional Law, the ABA’s Margaret Brent Award, and recognition from the California Women’s Law Center and the Washington Bar Association. An elected member of the American Law Institute and Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Hastings Center, she serves on the Executive Committee of the American Constitution Society and various committees of the National Academies. Dr. Goodwin previously held endowed chairs at the University of California, Irvine and the University of Minnesota, and held visiting positions at Harvard, Penn, Virginia, and Chicago law schools. She began her academic career after a Gilder-Lehrman Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Yale University.



NIKKI MCKINNEY

Nikki McKinney is Policy Director at Democracy Forward.

Nikki has worked for nearly two decades on the Hill and in the Executive Branch. She joined Democracy Forward after serving four years as Associate Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Labor. Before joining the Biden-Harris Administration, she was Labor Policy Director on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension for Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA).

She is a teacher by training, having taught high school social studies in public schools in Delaware and Virginia. Her first job after leaving the classroom was as a Legislative Assistant for Senator Susan M. Collins, where she handled Education, Labor, and Native American Affairs for the Maine Republican.

She joined the Obama Administration’s Labor Department’s Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs in 2010, eventually working her way up to Deputy Assistant Secretary. She returned to a focus on education policy in January 2017 and joined a small DC-based nonprofit, the Alliance for Excellent Education, as Director of Policy Development and Federal Government Relations, until returning to the Hill and working on the HELP Committee in 2018.

Nikki earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science Education from the University of Delaware and a Master of Arts in Education Policy Studies from the George Washington University. She lives in Virginia with her daughter, Paisley.



PAIGE ALEXANDER

Paige Alexander serves as chief executive officer of The Carter Center, a nonprofit organization founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter to advance peace and health worldwide. Alexander joined the Center in 2020 at a pivotal time for the organization and the country. In her first year, Alexander led the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic and a period of national social upheaval, while envisioning a path forward for The Carter Center as it transitioned from an organization that was founder-led to one that is guided by its founders' principles.

Since that time, Alexander has strengthened the Center's core peace and health programs and led the organization in new directions, including adding programs to address: the global mental health crisis; political polarization in the US; and the impact of climate change on global peace and public health.

Before joining The Carter Center, Alexander had a distinguished global development career, with more than two decades of experience in the government and nonprofit sectors. Between 1993 and 2001, Alexander worked at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), covering missions and development programs for the Europe and Eurasia region, including focusing on immediate post-conflict work in the Balkans. After leaving for 10 years to work in a leadership role in the nonprofit sector, Alexander returned to USAID in 2011 as a Presidential appointee to be the assistant administrator for Europe and Eurasia. In 2015, she was again Senate-confirmed to lead the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Bureau, overseeing 1,000 employees, programs in 12 countries, and more than \$1.4 billion in annual funding.

REV. PAUL RAUSHENBUSH

The Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush is President and CEO of Interfaith Alliance. An ordained Baptist minister, Rev. Raushenbush is a longtime interfaith leader and renowned advocate for civil rights and religious freedom. He works with affiliates, networks and leaders across the country to forge powerful alliances among people of diverse faiths and beliefs to build a resilient, inclusive multi-faith democracy.

Rev. Raushenbush speaks regularly at colleges, faith communities and institutes around the country – including The Chautauqua Institute, the Center for American Progress, Council on Foreign Relations, the New America Foundation and the Aspen Institute. He is a frequent commentator on issues of religion, civil rights and social justice in media national outlets including CNN, MSNBC, NPR, CBS, ABC, CPAN, The New York Times, Washington Post, BBC, Newsweek, The Hill, the Guardian, HuffPost, Salon and Religion News Service. He has published two books and contributed essays to several volumes on faith in public life.

Rev. Raushenbush also hosts the weekly podcast and radio show "The State of Belief," in partnership with Religion News Service. Notable guests have included Timothy Snyder, Skye Perryman, Rep. Jamie Raskin, Rep. Eric Swalwell, Katherine Stewart, Bishop William Barber, Rabbi Sharon Brous, Najeeba Sayeed, E.J. Dionne and Rob Reiner.



Prior to coming to Interfaith Alliance, Rev. Raushenbush served as senior vice president of the Auburn Seminary, and as the founding and executive editor of HuffPost Religion. Rev. Raushenbush has also served as associate dean of religious life and the chapel at Princeton University and as the senior advisor for public affairs and innovation at Interfaith America.

Rev. Raushenbush is married to the author Brad Gooch, and lives in New York City where they are raising their two children. He is the great-grandson of Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis and the great-grandson of the theologian Reverend Walter Rauschenbusch.



RAHA WALA

Raha is an advocacy strategist, lobbyist, and lawyer with over 15 years of experience designing, leading, and implementing human rights advocacy campaigns. At NILC, Raha leads the Strategy & Partnerships department, a talented team of advocates that run campaigns, build coalitions, and advocate for the interests of immigrant communities with lawmakers and government officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

Before coming to NILC, Raha served as the Advocacy Director at Physicians for Human Rights and Senior Director for Government Relations at Human Rights First. He has a J.D. from Georgetown Law School and an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he majored in Finance and Political Science.

When not at work, you can find Raha gardening, traveling, playing and designing board games, and DJ'ing and producing immersive events and experiences.



RANDI WEINGARTEN

Randi Weingarten is president of the 1.8 million-member American Federation of Teachers (AFT), representing educators, nurses and healthcare professionals, higher education faculty and staff, early childhood educators, and public employees nationwide. Elected in 2008, she leads the union's work to strengthen public education, expand access to healthcare and higher education, protect workers' rights, and advance an economy and democracy that work for all.

Before becoming AFT president, Weingarten served for 11 years as president of the United Federation of Teachers, representing approximately 200,000 New York City educators and school staff. Earlier in her career, she was counsel to UFT President Sandra Feldman and taught history at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn.

Under Weingarten's leadership, the AFT has advanced a "solution-driven unionism" approach that aligns the interests of workers with the needs of students and communities. She launched the AFT Innovation Fund to support educator-led reform, helped redesign teacher evaluation systems to emphasize growth and fairness, and

led efforts to raise entry standards for the teaching profession. She also oversaw the development of the AFT's Quality Education Agenda, focused on evidence-based, equitable, and sustainable reforms.

Weingarten has been a leading voice in the fight to adequately fund public schools, reduce the overuse of standardized testing, and fix struggling schools rather than close them. She spearheaded the creation of Share My Lesson, the nation's largest free educator resource platform, and helped build partnerships such as First Book, which has distributed millions of books to children.

She has championed community schools as hubs for education, health, and social services, and led a national partnership to revitalize McDowell County, West Virginia, integrating education with broader economic and community development. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Weingarten guided the AFT's work on school reopening safety and helped secure personal protective equipment for frontline healthcare workers.



RHETT BUTTLE

Rhett Buttle is an entrepreneur, advocate, and one of the most trusted leaders at the intersection of business and policy. He has held senior roles shaping policy and engagement for the White House Business Council, a governor's office, and multiple presidential campaigns.

He is the founder of Public Private Strategies (PPS), which brings together the public and private sectors to build coalitions and create strategic partnerships that drive policy and market outcomes.

Rhett helped launch the Next Gen Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Innovation Summit, and Small Business for America's Future. He also leads the Small Business Roundtable, the largest coalition of small business leaders, and launched Entrepreneurship Exchange which brings business leaders from across the globe together to promote commerce and diplomacy.

In addition, he serves as a Senior Fellow at The Aspen Institute where he helps lead the economic programming for The Aspen Ideas Festival and is part of the founding team for its economic forum.

Rhett is a contributor to *Forbes*, where he writes on the intersection of business and policy, and is frequently featured in several leading outlets including CNN, Fortune, Inc., Fast Company, and others.



ROB SHRIVER

Rob Shriver is the Managing Director of the Civil Service Strong and Good Government Initiatives at Democracy Forward.

In this role, he leads DF's efforts to ensure that the Federal government is delivering for all Americans, through a career civil service of experts hired based on their merits. Prior to joining DF, Rob served as the Acting Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in the Biden-Harris Administration. In this role, Rob was a champion for the Federal workforce and helped to ensure that OPM supported Federal employees from "hire to retire." His passions include improving government effectiveness and customer service and driving the federal government to be a model employer.

Rob has a long history of leadership, policy and program development, and operations. Rob was confirmed by the Senate on a bipartisan vote to be OPM's Deputy Director in December 2022. Rob previously served at OPM during President Obama's Administration, where he expanded equality for LGBTQ+ federal employees, improved federal labor relations, and implemented major provisions of the Affordable Care Act. Outside of OPM, Rob has worked in state government and private sector IT, and he began his career as a lawyer at the National Treasury Employees Union.

Rob is a graduate of Virginia Tech and the George Washington University Law School.



RUSHAB SANGHVI

Rushab is General Counsel of the American Federation of Government Employees ("AFGE"), the largest union representing federal employees. Rushab started his career with AFGE as a legal intern and has since held several roles organizing and litigating on behalf of federal employees. More recently, as General Counsel of AFGE, Rushab has led the union's legal efforts to challenge the Trump administration's attempts to dismantle the federal government, including by appearing in nearly a dozen lawsuits filed by AFGE since Trump's inauguration. A native of New Jersey, Rushab has degrees from CUNY Baruch College and the George Washington University Law School.



SEAN RANKIN

Sean Rankin is the President of the Democratic Attorneys General Association (DAGA).

Sean has been with DAGA since April 2016, first serving as DAGA's Executive Director and growing the organization into a full-time committee. Sean then became DAGA President in January 2022 when the committee transitioned into a new model of leadership that solidified its growth under Sean, setting it up to grow financially and politically in the years to come. Since Sean joined DAGA in 2016, the committee has won the majority of their competitive races against RAGA, reshaping the map for Democrats.

Prior to his tenure at DAGA, Sean spent 23 years working as a political operative in the Democratic Party. His tenure included statewide and federal election campaigns in 23 states as well as for the Democratic National Committee. In 2013, Sean became a founding partner at Apollo Political, LLC, a full-service political communications firm that leveraged cutting-edge technology, research, and narrative development to help clients achieve their political ambitions.

While serving as a political operative in the Democratic Party, Sean managed several congressional campaigns and served alongside Democratic allies to train and build capacity for political activities across the U.S. including support for President Obama's re-election in Ohio and Colorado. Previously, Sean worked for U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman (NM) and Tom Udall (NM), Governor Steve Beshear (KY) and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack (IA) as well as the Bill Bradley for President campaign among others.



SHANEQUA GAY

Gay is a storyteller, born and raised in Georgia, whose work draws on the environment and spiritual symbolism of the American South. Blending motifs from regional life, she explores identity, culture, and power through storytelling, highlighting formidable female figures and intergenerational relationships. Her practice—encompassing installations, paintings, performance, photography, video, and monumental sculptures—challenges dominant narratives, reclaims space through personal memory and mythology, and creates immersive environments that invite reflection on self and belonging.

Gay's recent exhibitions include *Repossessions*, Spelman College Museum, Atlanta, GA (2026); *Ancestral Mirrors*, Clark Atlanta Art Museum, Atlanta, GA (2025); *Four Women*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA (2024); *Atlanta Biennial*, Atlanta Contemporary (2021); *Le Monde Bossale*, Montreal, Canada, in (2021); *Adorned*, McColl Center for Arts and Innovation, Charlotte (2020); and *Holding Space for Nobility*, Ackland Museum, Chapel Hill North Carolina (2020).

Gay exhibits her works and procures residencies within the United States, Europe, Japan, and South Africa. She is a Do-Good Fellow recipient, an Emory University Arts and Social Justice Fellow, (2020) and a Hudgens Prize Finalist (2022). Currently, Gay is a visiting lecturer at Spelman College, the Visual Artist-in-Residence at Oglethorpe University, 2022-23, recipient of the Radcliffe Bailey Award for Excellence in Visual Art and is one of five Georgia Women to Watch selected by the Georgia Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts (2023).



SKYE PERRYMAN

Skye L. Perryman is the President and CEO of Democracy Forward, a nonpartisan, national legal organization that promotes democracy and progress through litigation, regulatory engagement, communications, policy education, and research. Named as one of the 2025 100 Most Influential People In The World by TIME Magazine, Ms. Perryman took the helm at Democracy Forward a few months after January 6, 2021, in the midst of rising extremism in communities and courts across the country. She has built a visionary team of legal, policy, and communications experts to confront anti-democratic extremism head-on while also using the law to advance progress and a bold vision for the future. Under Ms. Perryman’s leadership, Democracy Forward has expanded the scope and reach of its work, emerging as a nationally recognized institution that is taking on the most significant issues affecting people, families, and communities– from defending civil rights and fair wages to seeking to expand access to reproductive health care post-Dobbs to confronting attacks on education to addressing the climate crisis and much more.

Since January 2025, Democracy Forward has played a leading role in inspiring courage and in protecting the American people from harmful and unlawful federal executive action. The organization has filed hundreds of legal actions, launched hundreds of investigations, and, through its Democracy 2025 initiative, has organized the largest, most successful affirmative litigation effort against executive branch excesses in United States history.

Ms. Perryman serves on the boards of the Interfaith Alliance, the Atlas Performing Arts Center, the Texas Observer, the Baylor Line Foundation, and the Rise Up: Federal Workers Legal Defense Network. Alongside both progressive and conservative legal scholars, she co-chairs We Hold These Truths, Democracy Forward’s initiative to provide accessible civic education to the American public.



STACEY ABRAMS

Stacey Abrams is a New York Times bestselling author, political leader, entrepreneur, and producer, widely recognized for her national advocacy on voting rights and civic engagement. She served for eleven years in the Georgia House of Representatives, including seven as Minority Leader, and made history in 2018 as the first Black woman to become a major party’s gubernatorial nominee in the United States. A tax attorney by training, Abrams holds degrees from Spelman College, the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, and Yale Law School. She is the founder of several nonprofit organizations focused on democracy, equity, and economic empowerment, including Fair Fight Action, Fair Count, the Southern Economic Advancement Project, and the American Pride Rises Network. In the private sector, she has co-founded companies spanning financial services, consulting, and consumer goods, and launched the production company Sage Works Productions in 2020. Abrams is the Ronald W. Walters Endowed Chair for Race and Black Politics at Howard University and previously served as senior counsel to Rewiring America. Her creative work includes multiple award-winning projects such as the documentary All In: The Fight for Democracy, which was shortlisted for an Academy Award, and she has received NAACP Image Awards in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Abrams is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on various nonprofit and corporate boards.



SUNU CHANDY

Sunu P. Chandy (she/her) is a social justice activist including through her work as a poet and a civil rights attorney. She is the daughter of immigrants from Kerala, India, and currently lives in DC with her family. Sunu is a Senior Advisor with Democracy Forward, where she supports work often in the civil rights space, including for LGBTQIA+ rights. Her award-winning collection of poems, *My Dear Comrades*, was published by Regal House, and she is a Pushcart Prize nominated poet. She is also on the board of the Transgender Law Center, and has been included as one of the Washington Blade's Queer Women of Washington.



REV. SUSIE HAYWARD

Rev. Susie Hayward currently serves as Minister of Justice and Formation at Creekside UCC in South Minneapolis, where she works with multi-faith and multi-racial organizations and communities to advance justice. Prior to returning home to Minneapolis in 2023, Hayward worked for the Religion and Public Life program at Harvard Divinity School (HDS) and spent fourteen years with the U.S. Institute of Peace's Religion and Inclusive Societies program. There, she led efforts to analyze religious dimensions of violent conflict and to support peacebuilding initiatives engaging religious actors, with particular focus on Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Colombia, and Iraq. She also worked closely with colleagues across the US foreign policy landscape to advance religious literacy in support of human rights and peace promotion. Her research interests include interfaith engagement amid political violence, political Buddhism, and the role of religion in shaping women's work for peace and justice. She co-edited the book *Women, Religion and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*.

An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, Hayward studied Buddhism in Nepal. She holds degrees from Tufts and Harvard and is currently pursuing a doctorate at Georgetown University. She teaches, lectures widely, publishes in academic and policy venues, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and serves on the board or advisory council of numerous organizations. Her passion lies in connecting people and communities across divides in pursuit of healing justice.



TODD CONNOR

Todd Connor is currently CEO of Veterans for All Voters, an organization he co-founded to give a voice and a platform for the military connected community to address political polarization through election reforms and innovations. Todd is also the founder of Bunker Labs, a national entrepreneurship organization dedicated to helping the military-connected community start and grow businesses. Founded in Chicago in 2014, Bunker Labs grew to over 40 chapters across the United States before being acquired into the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University in 2024.

Todd is a former management consultant, U.S. Navy veteran, and has held many leadership roles in the public and private sector. In addition to Bunker Labs and Veterans for All Voters, he is also the founder of The Collective Academy, a leadership development consulting firm, as well as Emerson House, a luxe retreat venue in La Porte, Indiana. Todd holds a BA from Northwestern University, an MBA from the University of Chicago and is the author of *Third Shift Entrepreneur* (Wiley, 2021).

Todd serves as the lead faculty for the President George W. Bush Veteran Leadership Program in Dallas, Texas and is an Executive in Residence at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business where he is also an Assistant Adjunct Professor of Strategy teaching the Social Impact Lab. He has been recognized as a Presidential Leadership Scholar, a Presidio Fellow, and is a thought leader on entrepreneurship, military veterans, and election reform. Todd serves on the boards of the National Civic League, National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers, First Women's Bank, Bunker Labs and is a venture partner with the Academy Investor Network. Todd, his husband Andrew, and their son Jasper live between Hyde Park, Chicago and Northwest Indiana.



MAYOR TODD GLORIA

A third-generation San Diegan of Filipino, Dutch, Puerto Rican, and Native American descent, Mayor Gloria's lifelong career in public service was inspired by a lesson his parents – a hotel maid and a gardener – taught him at a young age: if you care about something, then you should leave it better than you found it. That lesson continues to motivate Mayor Gloria to improve San Diego every single day.

Mayor Gloria has spent his entire professional life in service to the public, beginning his career at the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency. He then went on to serve as District Director to United States Congresswoman Susan A. Davis, whom he credits as his mentor.

In 2008, Mayor Gloria was elected to the San Diego City Council following Christine Kehoe and Toni Atkins in serving the Third District. In 2012, after serving his first term, Mayor Gloria's colleagues on the City Council elected him as their City Council President.

In 2013, he assumed the reigns of the City, beginning his time as Interim Mayor after the resignation of Bob Filner. During that time, Mayor Gloria is widely credited with restoring the public's trust in city government.

In 2016, Mayor Gloria was elected to the California State Assembly to represent the 78th Assembly District. He immediately rose to a leadership position in the Assembly serving first as Assistant Majority Whip and eventually Majority Whip.

During his time in the Assembly, Mayor Gloria passed legislation on many of the major issues San Diego is working to address including building more affordable housing, fighting gun violence, combatting climate change, and providing resources for those experiencing homelessness.



VALARIE KAUR

Valarie Kaur is a renowned social justice leader, lawyer, award-winning filmmaker, faith leader, mother, and best-selling author of *See No Stranger*, *Sage Warrior*, and *World of Wonder*. She leads the Revolutionary Love Project, building a movement to reclaim love as a force for justice. A daughter of Punjabi Sikh farmers in California, Valarie earned degrees at Stanford University, Harvard Divinity School, and Yale Law School and holds several honorary doctorates. She lives in LA in a multi-generational family.

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V SPEHAR

V Spehar is an award-winning digital journalist, podcaster, and content creator making news more human and accessible. Creator of Under the Desk News, V has built a following of over 4.7 million by delivering current events with clarity, empathy, and wit. They tackle topics from Gen Z voter engagement to gender-affirming care, and their reporting has included interviews with Presidents Biden and Obama, Vice President Harris, and key cabinet members.

V has covered major political and cultural moments, including the 2024 Democratic National Convention and the Paris Olympics for TikTok, and contributed to outlets such as The Washington Post, The L.A. Times, and NBC News. Recognized with a Special Achievement Webby Award, a Shorty Award for News Creator of the Year, and as one of TIME100's Most Influential Digital Voices of 2025, V is a sought-after speaker on authenticity, resilience, and civic engagement. They are currently working on their debut book with Zando Publishing, coming in 2027.



WESLEY CLARK

General Wesley K. Clark (Ret.) is a decorated U.S. Army veteran, international strategist, and business leader with over four decades of experience in military service and global affairs. He currently serves as CEO of Wesley K. Clark & Associates, Chairman and Founder of Enverra, Inc., and holds advisory and board positions with the Blackstone Group, SICPA, AREI, the Atlantic Council, and the International Crisis Group. He is also a Senior Fellow at UCLA's Burkle Center for International Relations and a founding member of the Clinton Global Initiative. A West Point valedictorian and Rhodes Scholar, Clark earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford University. His military career spanned 38 years, during which he served in Vietnam—where he was wounded in combat—and rose to become Supreme Allied Commander Europe, leading NATO's successful Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. His leadership helped halt ethnic cleansing and stabilize the Balkans through a coordinated air campaign and diplomatic engagement. General Clark is the recipient of numerous honors, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart, along with honorary knighthoods from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and France's Legion of Honor. A best-selling author, he has published four books and remains an influential voice on security policy, global strategy, and leadership.



WINSTON PINGEON

Winston Pingeon graduated from American University and immediately joined the United States Capitol Police, where he served for over five years. In his time as an officer, he served on numerous assignments including the Ceremonial Unit, the Special Operations Division and the Civil Disturbance Unit or full riot gear team, where he was assigned on January 6th, 2021. He has since left the Capitol Police and works in technology, and is an artist.



YVONNE MYLES

Yvonne Myles is founder of Vibrantly Living You, a program inspiring health and wellness through movement. As a Black Belt Nia Technique teacher, she leads people in mindful dance-based movement that conditions the body, stimulates the mind and inspires a spirit of well-being.

Yvonne retired from ConocoPhillips after a 34-year career in the energy industry, serving at times in IT, Public Affairs, HR and Knowledge Sharing.

A year later in 2017 — and immediately upon its founding — she joined Bayou Blue Democrats, a Houston-based grassroots political organization. As part of the executive team from 2021 onwards, she served as treasurer before taking on the role of Communications Chair. In 2025, she introduced the concept of Democracy Cafe to engage people in meaningful conversations about democracy.