

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL

70TH ANNIVERSARY HOMECOMING

JULY 22 - 25, 2026 | WASHINGTON, DC



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ABOUT SCI

Sister Cities International (SCI) is a nonprofit organization that promotes peace and mutual understanding by fostering partnerships between U.S. communities and cities around the world through citizen diplomacy, cultural exchange, and economic collaboration.





SisterCities

INTERNATIONAL

Connect globally. Thrive locally.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

July 22, 2026

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you to the Sister Cities International 70th Anniversary Homecoming in Washington, D.C. With attendees coming from all over the United States and other countries, Sister Cities International is excited to welcome hundreds of citizen diplomats to our celebration.

As citizen diplomats, the friendships we develop and the work that we do to promote peace and mutual understanding have a powerful impact on the world. Sister Cities International is committed to developing new sister city partnerships and encouraging our members to create innovative and impactful programs that address the most pressing global challenges. We are especially pleased to welcome the Vice President of Ghana, Her Excellency Prof. Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang as our opening keynote speaker. Other special guests include the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, the Honorable Albert Ramdin; the Mayor of Washington, D.C., the Honorable Muriel Bowser; Ambassadors and speakers from the Department of State, among others.

As we welcome Sister Cities International volunteers, diplomats, businesspeople, and municipal officials to Washington D.C., we hope you will take advantage of the many networking and educational experiences that are a part of our 70th Anniversary. From seminars on issues important to the history and future of the United States to tours, receptions, and our Annual Awards and Silent Auction, we hope you will take advantage of all that is here.

Many thanks to the many Sister Cities leaders and volunteers who have also contributed untold hours and expertise to this very special event honoring our seventy years of building peace.

Thank you for being a part of the 70th Anniversary Homecoming. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunities it offers as well as our beautiful and historical nation's capital. Our wish is that you will leave here with a greater understanding and appreciation of our past as well as an increased knowledge and appreciation of the future of Sister Cities International and its thousands of partnerships around the world.

Sincerely,

Ricki Garrett, PhD
President and CEO
Sister Cities International



LETTER FROM THE OUTGOING CHAIR



DEAR CITIZEN DIPLOMATS,

As we gather for Sister Cities International's 70th Anniversary Homecoming, we celebrate both an organizational milestone and the enduring power of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's vision of peace through people.

For 70 years, Sister Cities International has brought communities together across borders through friendship, cultural exchange, education, economic collaboration, and citizen diplomacy. At a time when the world continues to face division and uncertainty, our mission remains as vital as ever.

This Homecoming in Washington, DC is a meaningful opportunity to honor our history while looking boldly toward the future. From mayoral conversations and youth leadership to the Annual Awards gala and our America250 partnership, this anniversary reminds us that our network is actively shaping the next chapter of global connection.

As my term as Chair comes to a close, I am deeply grateful to our Board, staff, member cities, volunteers, and partners who carry this mission forward every day. Serving Sister Cities International has been one of the great honors of my life, and I wish incoming Chair Sheri Capehart great success in her new role.

Thank you for your commitment to citizen diplomacy and to building peace, one relationship at a time.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carlo Capua Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carlo Capua
Chair, Board of Directors
Sister Cities International



LETTER FROM THE INCOMING CHAIR



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES. ADVANCING CITIZEN DIPLOMACY.

Seventy years ago, President Dwight D. Eisenhower envisioned a world where citizens could become ambassadors for peace through meaningful relationships across borders. That vision became Sister Cities International—a movement built on friendship, understanding, and the belief that communities can help shape a more peaceful world.

As we celebrate our 70th Anniversary Homecoming, we honor the thousands of leaders, volunteers, youth, educators, and partners who have dedicated themselves to advancing this mission through seven decades of citizen diplomacy.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Chair Carlo Capua for his service and commitment to Sister Cities International. We are grateful for his dedication to the organization and to the important mission of citizen diplomacy.

This anniversary is not only a celebration of our past—it is the beginning of our next era.

As Incoming Chair, I am honored to build upon our legacy by strengthening our organization, expanding opportunities for youth leadership and exchange, growing strategic partnerships, and ensuring that Sister Cities International continues to inspire communities around the world.

Together, we will continue Connecting Communities. Advancing Citizen Diplomacy.

Sheri Capehart
Incoming Chair, Board of Directors
Sister Cities International



Day 1 Agenda

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

1:00 PM

Registration | *George Washington University*

For guests attending the Africa Regional Forum, registration will begin at George Washington University at 1:00 PM. *For all other guests, registration will begin in The Ritz-Carlton at 4:00 PM.*

1:00 PM

Africa Region Forum | *George Washington University*

1957 E St. NW, Room 603, Washington, DC 20052

RSVP Required. Celebrate and learn more about U.S.-Africa sister city partnerships. The forum features expert briefings, networking, and more.

4:00 PM

Registration | *The Ritz-Carlton*

Guests arrive in Washington, DC and check in. Registration will begin in The Ritz-Carlton at 4:00 PM.

6:00 PM

Embassy of Thailand VIP Reception | *Thailand Ambassador's Residence*

2145 Decatur Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008

By invitation only. Board members, Honorary Board members, and sponsors are invited to this exclusive reception recognizing our leadership on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary. Join us for heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks at the Thailand Ambassador's Residence.

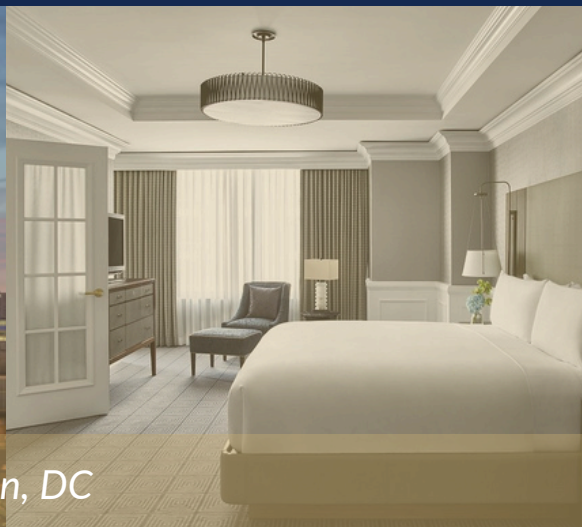
9:00 PM

Informal Networking | *The Ritz-Carlton*

Guests are invited to gather at The Ritz-Carlton for informal networking and conversation.



The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, DC



Africa Region Forum

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM | George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs Lindner Family Commons (Room 603), 1957 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20052

NETWORKING

WELCOME

Jennifer Cooke

Director, George Washington University Elliot School, Institute for African Studies

“ECONOMIC BRIDGES”

Witney Schneidman | Moderator

Senior Fellow, Africa Growth Initiative in the Global Economy and Development program at Brookings

Richard Buckler

Sister Cities International Representative to Zambia

H. E. Chibamba Kanyama

Ambassador of Zambia

H.E. Elsie S. Kanza

Ambassador of the Republic of Tanzania

Ronda Pierce

Sister Cities International Africa Region Representative

H.E Wilbard Hellao

Ambassador of Namibia

Gerard Philippeaux

Executive Director, Miami-Dade County International Trade Consortium (ITC)

Dr. Jean Bailey

Sister Cities International Representative to South Africa

“SPORTS, CULTURE, & EDUCATIONAL BRIDGES”

Lauri Fitz-Pegado | Moderator

Former U.S. Foreign Service Officer

H.E. Alfredo Fabião Nuvunga

Ambassador of Mozambique

H.E. Agostinho Van-Dúnem

Ambassador of the Republic of Angola

Fatima Benge

Sister Cities International Representative to Angola

CLOSING REMARKS

SIGNING OF MOUS AND AGREEMENTS

Day 2 Agenda

Thursday, July 23, 2026 | *The Ritz-Carlton*

7:00 AM

Breakfast and Registration | *Ballroom Foyer*

Guests arrive in Washington, DC and check in at The Ritz-Carlton.

8:00 AM

EAP Bureau Regional Briefing | *Plaza 1*

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs presents a regional briefing.

The SCI Region Representative Perspective on the Western Hemisphere with Bill Boerum | *Plaza 2*

9:00 AM

SCA Bureau Regional Briefing | *Plaza 1*

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs presents a regional briefing.

EUR Bureau Regional Briefing | *Plaza 2*

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs presents a regional briefing.

10:30 AM

Opening Ceremony | *Salon 1 & 2*

Opening Ceremony includes Parade of Flags, presentation of colors by US Air Force Color Guard, and welcome remarks.

11:30 AM

Keynotes Speaker | *Salon 1 & 2*

Keynote speech by the Vice President of Ghana, Her Excellency Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang.

12:30 PM

Presidential Lunch | *Salon 1 & 2*

A formal seated luncheon at The Ritz-Carlton accompanied by a cultural performance and a tribute to America's 250th Anniversary.

Sister Cities Showcase | *Plaza 1 & 2* | 12:30pm - 5:30pm

SCI Showcase features a collection of selected photos submitted by our Sister Cities Associations and Commissions showing their recent major activities and community events.

2:15 PM

Sports Diplomacy Fireside Chat | *Salon 1 & 2*

A fireside chat with the Senior Advisor for Sports Diplomacy at the U.S. Department of State.

3:30 PM

Outgoing Board Meeting | *The Roosevelt Room*

3:45 PM

Mayors Panel: Amplifying Local Impact — How Sister Cities Expand the Homefront | *Salon 1 & 2*

An opportunity to hear from a panel of distinguished mayors.

6:00 PM

Embassy Welcome Reception | *Japanese Ambassador's Residence**

Guests will be welcomed for an exceptional diplomatic reception. The reception will feature a buffet dinner and drinks.

9:00 PM

Late Evening Networking | *Quadrant Bar & Lounge*

Guests may continue conversations and networking at The Ritz-Carlton.

*Transportation provided from The Ritz-Carlton

Regional Briefings

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM | Plaza 1 & 2



Christopher Quade | *Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Christopher Quade currently serves as the Director of the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy in the East Asian & Pacific Affairs Bureau at the U.S. Department of State. Immediately prior to beginning this assignment, he was a Member of the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff. From 2020-2023, he was the Press Attaché for the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, and previously served as the Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, Spain; as the Deputy Public Affairs Officer in Kabul, Afghanistan; and as the Deputy Press Attaché in Tokyo, Japan. His other overseas assignments include postings at the U.S. Embassies in Seoul, South Korea and Muscat, Oman. In Washington DC, he served as Special Assistant to then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as a Watch Officer/Senior Watch Officer in the State Department Operations Center, and on the State Department's Japan Desk.



Deborah Eisenberg | *Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

Deborah Eisenberg is a communications professional with over 15 years of experience working in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. She holds a master's degree in international marketing and communication from The Fletcher School at Tufts University. She worked in strategic communications at the Department from 2013-2016 in IIP. She has run her own business consulting technology startups on media relations strategy and helped build the US presence of a UK based PR and Marketing agency in both New York and San Francisco. Deborah started her career at IREX working on ECA programs and spent a year working in Bishkek at the American University Central Asia.



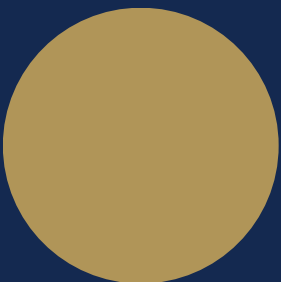
Izaak Martin | *Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

Izaak Martin entered the Foreign Service in 2009. In his most recent assignment, he worked on global communication strategy in the Bureau of Global Public Affairs. Previously, he was the Senior ASEAN Affairs Officer in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He has also served as U.S. Embassy Berlin's Public Engagement Officer, managing speaker programs, exchanges, education, and other public outreach. Prior to Berlin, he served as the Grants Management Officer in Kabul, Assistant Public Affairs Officer in Ljubljana, Consular Officer in Manila, and Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in Bangkok. Before joining the State Department, he worked in New York for Corbis, a stock photography agency, managing image research teams in the United States and Canada.



Shelly Seaver | *Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

Shelly Seaver is a career Senior Foreign Service Officer currently serving as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA/PPD). In this capacity, she oversees public engagement, outreach, grants, and exchanges across the South and Central Asian region. In June 2024, Shelly earned a Master of Science degree in National Security Strategy at the National War College (NWC) in Washington, D.C. Prior to NWC, Shelly served as Division Chief in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Office of Analysis for Africa (INR/AF). From 2018-2021, she served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Banjul, The Gambia. She has also served as Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic; Press Officer in Sofia, Bulgaria; Vice Consul in Frankfurt, Germany; and Public Affairs Officer in Podgorica, Montenegro. Shelly graduated from Emory University, was a Fulbright scholar, and has received numerous State Department awards for work promoting key USG priorities.



Benjamin Sand | *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

Benjamin Sand is the Spokesperson and Deputy Director in the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. He previously in the Department's newly established China House. Earlier, he was Deputy Spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and led Mission China's EducationUSA programs. Other Foreign Service assignments include head of the political unit at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, press officer in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, and ambassador's staff aide in Beijing. Before joining the Foreign Service, Ben worked as a relief worker in East Timor, Eritrea, and South Sudan and served as a foreign correspondent in Hong Kong and Iraq, as well as Voice of America's Pakistan and Afghanistan Bureau Chief in Islamabad. A fourth-generation Brooklynite, he lives with his daughter in Washington, D.C.

Opening Ceremony & Keynote Speaker

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM | Salon 1 & 2

Emceed by Outgoing Board Chair of Sister Cities International, Carlo Capua



The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of Washington DC

The Honorable Muriel Bowser is the seventh elected Mayor of Washington, DC. Mayor Bowser has served her hometown in elected office since 2004 as Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (2004–2006), Member of the DC Council (2007–2015), and now Mayor since 2015. On November 8, she became only the second person elected three times as Mayor of Washington, DC, and the first African American woman to be elected to three, four-year terms as mayor of an American city. Since taking office, Mayor Bowser has boldly reset DC's global and national competitiveness, sped up affordable housing production, diversified the DC economy, oversaw consistent enrollment growth across the District's public schools, increased satisfaction in city services, refocused efforts around achieving statehood, and invested in programs and policies that allow more families to live and thrive across the city.



**Her Excellency Professor Naana
Jane Opoku-Agyemang**
Vice President of Ghana

Her Excellency Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang serves as Vice President of the Republic of Ghana. A distinguished academic, she previously served as Ghana's Minister for Education and was the first woman appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast. Throughout her career, she has championed education, gender equity, and public service, earning national and international recognition for her contributions to higher education and governance. Her leadership continues to advance Ghana's development while promoting inclusive growth and international engagement.

Presidential Luncheon

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM | Salon 1 & 2

Introductory Remarks by Incoming Board Chair of Sister Cities International, Sheri Capehart



H.E. Laurent Bili | *Ambassador of
France to the United States*

Laurent Bili has served as Ambassador of France to the United States since March 2023. He is a career diplomat who has held senior leadership roles at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and served as France's ambassador to China, Brazil, Turkey, and Thailand.



Sherry Dowlatshahi | *Honorary
Board Member, SCI | Moderator*

Ms. Dowlatshahi serves as Chief Diplomacy & Protocol Officer for the City of San Antonio, where she leads the Global Engagement Office and oversees international relations, protocol, and the City's global partnerships. She manages San Antonio's award-winning Sister Cities Program and serves in numerous international leadership roles, including on the Honorary Board of Sister Cities International and as its Mexico Country Representative.



Daniela Serna | *General Counsel and
Executive Vice President, The Alamo Trust*

Daniela Serna serves as Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Alamo Trust, Inc., the nonprofit organization that manages the day-to-day operations of The Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. She has helped lead the implementation of the transformative Alamo Plan, overseeing legal, governance, fundraising, and strategic initiatives while advancing international partnerships that support the site's preservation and global significance.



Agustin Rebollo Fuente | *Political
Counsellor, Embassy of Spain*

Agustín Rebollo Fuente has served as Political Counsellor at the Embassy of Spain in Washington since 2021. A member of the Spanish Diplomatic Service since 1999, he has served in senior diplomatic roles across four continents, including at Spain's Mission to the United Nations and as Senior Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Sports Diplomacy Fireside Chat

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM | Salon 1 &

Introduction by Len Olender, Chair, Sport Diplomacy Task Force, Sister Cities International



Rob Placek | *Senior Advisor for Sports Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State*

Rob Placek was appointed Senior Advisor for Sports Diplomacy in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State in January 2026. Prior to joining the State Department, he served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Presidential Advance, managing domestic and international travel and events for the President. He previously held operations and media affairs roles during the first Trump Administration, served as Director of Visits and Protocol at the British Embassy Washington, and worked in the offices of Senators Mike Johanns and JD Vance. He holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Creighton University and completed a Fulbright Fellowship in Canadian politics at the University of British Columbia.



Carlo Capua | *Chair, Sister Cities International* | **Moderator**

Carlo Capua is Senior Principal at the Rainwater Charitable Foundation, where he works with grantees focused on transformational impact across North Texas. Previously Fort Worth's Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Strategy and Innovation, he currently chairs the Board of Directors of Sister Cities International and has led initiatives in civic innovation, entrepreneurship, and international exchange.



Mayors Panel: Amplifying Local Impact — How Sister Cities Expand the Homefront

3:45 PM – 5:00 PM | Salon 1 & 2



Ron Nirenberg | *Former Mayor, San Antonio, TX* | **Moderator**

Ron Nirenberg is the Democratic Nominee for Bexar County Judge and former Mayor of San Antonio. During his time at City Hall, he dedicated himself to building a stronger, more inclusive, and more innovative community. Today, he serves as the Calgaard Distinguished Professor of Practice at Trinity University and has just released his first book, *Nirenberg: The Education of a Texas Public Servant*.



Haim Bibas | *Chair, Federation of Local Authorities* | *Mayor, Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut, Israel*

Haim Bibas is serving his fourth term as Mayor of Modi'in Maccabim Reut, where he has led the city's significant growth and development since first taking office in 2008. He also serves as Chairman of the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, representing 257 municipalities and advancing policies that strengthen local government nationwide.



Steve Patterson | *Mayor, Athens, OH*

Mayor Steve Patterson is the full-time Mayor of Athens, Ohio and former Associate Professor of Psychology at Ohio University. Mayor Patterson served in the United States Air Force and the District of Columbia Air National Guard for over 20 years in both the Enlisted and Commissioned ranks and retired as a Major.



Lauren Poe | *Former Mayor, Gainesville, FL*

Lauren Poe is the Co-founder, President, and CEO of the Greater Gainesville International Center, a nonprofit dedicated to elevating, celebrating, and empowering Gainesville's international, immigrant, and refugee communities. Before founding GGIC, Lauren served fifteen years as a Gainesville City Commissioner and Mayor.

Day 3 Agenda

Friday, July 24, 2026 | Organization of American States

9:00 AM

Welcome and Remarks

Welcome and introduction by Dr. Ricki Garrett, SCI President and CEO, and remarks by Assistant Secretary of the ECA, Cate Dillon.

11:00 AM

Annual Business Meeting

12:30 PM

Luncheon with Keynote Speaker

Welcome remarks by Board Chair, Sheri Capehart and keynote speech by Assistant Secretary General of OAS, Laura Gil.

1:30 PM

Diplomacy Supercharged - Sister City Partnerships Bolster International Ties

Panel featuring His Excellency José Miguel Alemán Healy, His Excellency Lateef Kayode Are, First Counselor Katarzyna Rybka-Iwańska, and Minister Masatsugu Odaira, moderated by Margot Carrington.

2:30 PM

2026 YAAS Winners Celebration

Join us for a virtual gallery tour as we introduce our 2026 YAAS winners.

3:30 PM

Intermission

Take some time to unwind before we reconvene for the evening's events.

5:30 PM

Departure for Evening Events

Shuttles to the OAS will depart from The Ritz-Carlton at 5:30 p.m. Return transportation to The Ritz-Carlton will be provided following the evening events.

6:00 PM

Cocktail Hour

Mingle, enjoy appetizers and drinks, and bid on silent auction items.

7:30 PM

Welcome Remarks

Remarks given by OAS Secretary General, Albert Ramdin, introduced by Bill Boerum, SCI Liaison to the OAS.

7:45 PM

Gala Dinner

Please join us for a seated dinner featuring a main course and dessert. Black tie optional attire is welcomed.

8:15 PM

Annual Awards Ceremony

Program led by Board Chair, Sheri Capehart and awards announced by former U.S. Pavilion Youth Ambassadors.

Welcome and Remarks

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Organization of American States

Welcome remarks and introduction will be made by Dr. Ricki Garrett, President and CEO of Sister Cities International



Assistant Secretary Cate Dillon

*Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State*

Cate Dillon was confirmed as the ECA Assistant Secretary on May 18, 2026. Dillon is a political strategist and finance expert and was the White House Liaison for the State Department. With extensive experience in government operations, campaign finance, and strategic budgeting, she has played a key role in high profile political and legislative initiatives for the Trump Administration. Dillon was the Director of Administration for the 2024 Republican National Convention, managing a multi-million-dollar budget, overseeing all contracts, and leading staff operations. Before her time in Milwaukee, she was Chief Clerk and Director of Finance for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Her background includes leadership roles at the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and Leah for Senate, where she drove fundraising efforts. Dillon holds a BA in economics and political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a native of the Washington, DC area.

Luncheon with Keynote Speaker

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM | Organization of American States

Welcome remarks will be made by Sheri Capehart, Board Chair of Sister Cities International
Introduction will be made by Bill Boerum, Sister Cities International Liaison to the OAS



Her Excellency Ambassador Laura Gil

*Assistant Secretary General,
Organization of American States*

Ambassador Laura Gil was elected Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States on May 5, 2025, for a five-year term, becoming the first woman to hold the position in the Organization's history. An internationalist and seasoned public servant, she is leading the Office of the Assistant Secretary General with an emphasis on transparency, engagement with civil society, the defense of human rights, gender equality, and institutional modernization, while working closely with Secretary General Albert Ramdin to strengthen the Organization's effectiveness. Prior to her election, she served as Colombia's Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs and as Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna. She holds a B.A. from St. John's College and an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Diplomacy Supercharged - Sister City Partnerships Bolster International Ties

1:30 PM | Organization of American States



His Excellency José Miguel Alemán Healy

Ambassador, Embassy of Panama

Ambassador José Miguel Alemán Healy was appointed Ambassador of Panama to the United States by President José Raúl Mulino, and his appointment was officially confirmed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Javier Martínez Acha on September 6, 2024. He holds a Juris Doctor from Tulane University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Ripon College, Wisconsin, and brings extensive experience in public service, including serving as Panama's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1999 to 2003 and as Vice Minister of Government and Justice in 1991. In addition to his distinguished public service, he is a founding partner of the law firm Arias, Alemán & Mora and has held numerous leadership roles in Panama's legal and business communities.



His Excellency Lateef Kayode Are

Ambassador, Embassy of Nigeria

Ambassador Lateef Kayode Kolawole Are is Nigeria's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United States. A retired Nigerian Army Colonel, he served as Director General of the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) from 1999 to 2007 and briefly as National Security Adviser in 2010. He was commissioned from the Nigerian Defence Academy in 1974 and later earned a First Class Honours degree in Psychology from the University of Ibadan and a master's degree in International Law and Diplomacy from the University of Lagos.



Katarzyna Rybka-Iwańska

First Counselor, Head of Communications and Public Diplomacy, Embassy of the Republic of Poland

Katarzyna Rybka-Iwańska is a Polish diplomat specializing in public diplomacy, strategic communications, and media relations, and currently serves as Head of Communications and Public Diplomacy at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, D.C., where she leads the Embassy's public outreach. Drawing on her experience at the Embassies of Poland in Washington and Israel and at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she advances collaborations with cultural institutions, universities, think tanks, media organizations, and local communities, bringing practical insights into how public diplomacy, storytelling, culture, and city-level engagement strengthen international cooperation and mutual understanding.



Masatsugu Odaira

Minister of Public Affairs, Embassy of Japan

Mr. Masatsugu Odaira has served as Minister of Public Affairs at the Embassy of Japan in the United States since September 2025, following a diplomatic career that began in 1998 after graduating from the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Law. Throughout his career, he has held senior positions in China affairs, international law, Japan-U.S. relations, and national security, including serving as Director of the First China and Mongolia Division, Director of the International Legal Affairs Division, Executive Assistant to Japan's Minister and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Counsellor at the Embassy of Japan in China.



Margot Carrington

Former Minister-Counselor, US Embassy Tokyo | Moderator

Margot Carrington retired from the Department of State in 2018 after a 25-year career as a U.S. diplomat, serving four tours in Japan, including as U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy's Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs, and held senior diplomatic roles in Washington, D.C., Malaysia, and Fukuoka while earning numerous honors for her contributions to U.S.-Japan relations and cultural diplomacy. In retirement, she continues to strengthen U.S.-Japan ties through her work with the National Association of Japan-America Societies (NAJAS), the U.S.-Japan Council, Sister Cities International, the Japan-America Society of North Carolina, and Asheville Sister Cities.

Dinner Welcome Remarks

7:30 PM | Organization of American States

Introduction will be made by Bill Boerum, Sister Cities International Liaison to the OAS



His Excellency Ambassador Albert Ramdin

*Secretary General, Organization of
American States*

After his second term at the Organization of American States in 2015, Ambassador Albert Ramchand Ramdin returned to Suriname, where he advised the Minister of Foreign Affairs on strategic policy matters, joined an internationally operating U.S.-based mining company, and later served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2025, he was elected Secretary General of the Organization of American States, bringing more than 25 years of experience in international negotiation, multilateral diplomacy, development assistance, public policy development and execution, strategic trade and business facilitation, and institutional reform. Among his many achievements, he championed the first official Private Sector Dialogue with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States and has built an extensive network across governments, the private sector, civil society, and international institutions throughout the Americas.

Day 4 Agenda

Saturday, July 25, 2026 | Departure and Optional Activities

10:00 AM

Incoming Board of Directors Meeting and Lunch *Army Navy Country Club, Arlington, VA*

The incoming Board of Directors will convene for the first formal meeting of the new governance term. This session will include confirmation of leadership roles, review of organizational priorities, and strategic alignment for the year ahead.

12:00 PM

Lunch

*Guests depart Washington, DC or continue to explore the city at their leisure.
See Explore DC page for suggested local activities.*

EXPLORE DC



TOP ACTIVITIES

Visit the National Mall

A must-see stretch of iconic monuments and memorials, including the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. Perfect for walking tours, photos, and soaking in U.S. history.

Tour a Smithsonian Museum

The world's largest museum complex, offering free admission to 20+ museums and galleries. Highlights include Air & Space, Natural History, and American History.

Explore the U.S. Capitol and Library of Congress

Connect with other professionals and expand your business network.

Go Shopping at Georgetown

A charming historic neighborhood known for cobblestone streets, waterfront views, and great shopping and dining. Ideal for a relaxed afternoon stroll.

Catch a Washington Nationals Game at Nationals Park

Experience America's pastime in the heart of DC with a fun, high-energy atmosphere, local food vendors, and in-game entertainment like the famous Presidents Race.

CLASSIC DC DINING

Founding Farmers

A DC favorite known for farm-to-table American classics and hearty portions just a short walk from the hotel.

Chef Geoff's West End

A popular neighborhood spot serving elevated American comfort food in a relaxed, welcoming setting.

Rasika West End

An award-winning modern Indian restaurant famous for its innovative dishes like palak chaat.

Old Ebbitt Grill

A historic DC landmark near the White House known for classic American fare and one of the city's most popular oyster bars.

The Hamilton

A lively, spacious restaurant offering a wide-ranging menu of American favorites, sushi, and live music just steps from the National Mall.

Martin's Tavern

A charming Georgetown institution famous for its presidential history and classic American comfort food.

Filomena Ristorante

A beloved Italian restaurant known for its homemade pasta, hearty portions, and warm, old-world atmosphere.

EXPLORE DC CONTINUED

Scan to explore the best things to do in Washington, DC during your visit.



MUSEUMS

Many Smithsonian museums offer free admission and are located along the National Mall, making them easy to explore between conference sessions.

National Air and Space Museum

A must-visit for all ages, featuring historic aircraft, spacecraft, and interactive exhibits on aviation and space exploration.

National Museum of Natural History

Home to the Hope Diamond and fascinating exhibits on dinosaurs, oceans, and human evolution—great for a quick or extended visit.

National Museum of American History

Explore iconic artifacts like the Star-Spangled Banner while learning about U.S. culture, innovation, and history.

Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

A leading modern and contemporary art museum known for bold exhibits and its striking circular architecture.

National Museum of the American Indian

Highlights the history, culture, and art of Indigenous peoples of the Americas, with thoughtful exhibits and a renowned café.

National Portrait Gallery

Explore portraits of influential Americans—from presidents to cultural icons—in a beautifully restored historic building.

National Museum of African American History and Culture

A powerful and immersive museum exploring African American history, culture, and contributions. One of the most impactful experiences in DC.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Georgetown

A charming historic neighborhood known for cobblestone streets, waterfront views, and great shopping and dining. Ideal for a relaxed afternoon stroll.

The Wharf

A vibrant waterfront destination with restaurants, live music, and scenic views along the Potomac River. Great for dining, nightlife, and sunset walks.

Dupont Circle

A vibrant neighborhood with art galleries, bookstores, cafes, and a central park that's perfect for people-watching.

NOMA/Union Market

A vibrant food hall and cultural hub in Northeast DC featuring dozens of local vendors, global cuisine, and unique shopping—all under one roof.

GETTING AROUND DC THE METRO

Washington, DC's public transportation system, Washington Metro, is one of the easiest and most efficient ways to get around the city.

Closest Metro Stops to the The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, DC:

- Foggy Bottom-GWU (Blue, Orange, Silver Lines) – about a 10-minute walk
- Dupont Circle (Red Line) – about a 12-minute walk

How to Ride the Metro:

1. **Get a SmarTrip Card:** Purchase a reusable SmarTrip Card at any Metro station or load it digitally on your phone.
2. **Tap In & Out:** Tap your card or phone at the fare gates when entering and exiting the station.
3. **Know Your Line & Direction:** Trains are identified by color and final destination. Check station signage to ensure you're heading the right way.
4. **Check Fares:** Fares vary by distance and time of day (typically \$2-\$6 per ride).

Helpful Tips:

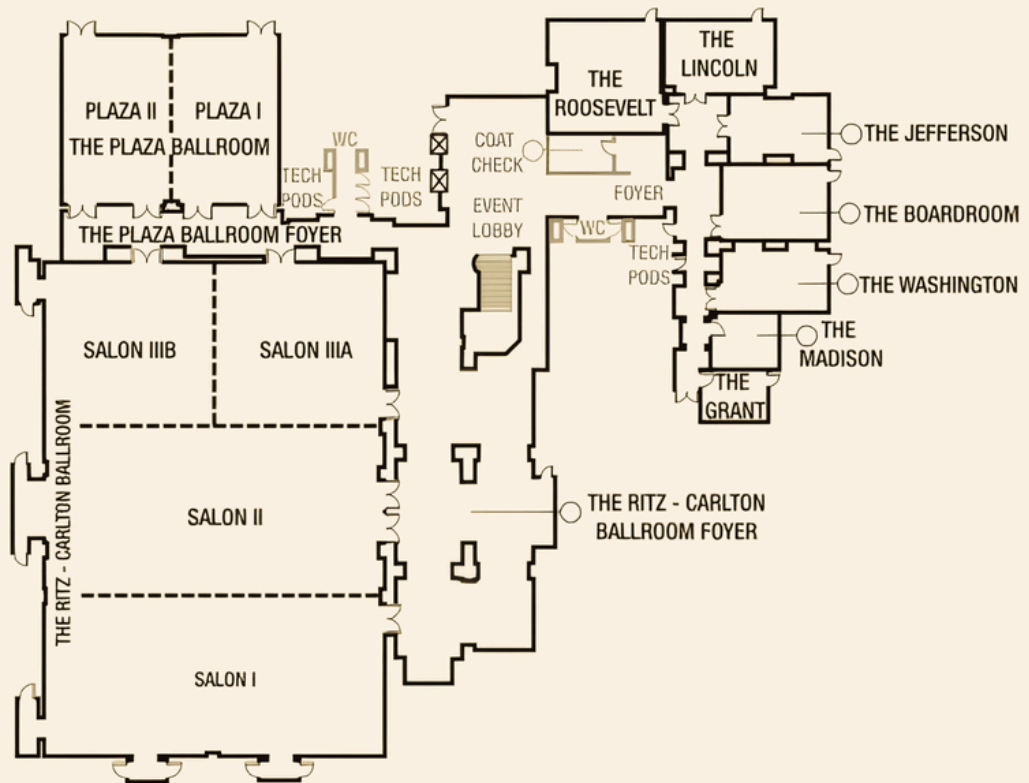
- Trains run frequently during peak hours; allow extra time on weekends.
- Stand to the right on escalators; walk on the left.
- Metro maps are posted in every station and available via apps like Google Maps or Citymapper.
- Late-night service is limited—plan ahead if traveling after midnight.



The Ritz-Carlton

Washington, DC

MEETING ROOMS BALLROOM LEVEL



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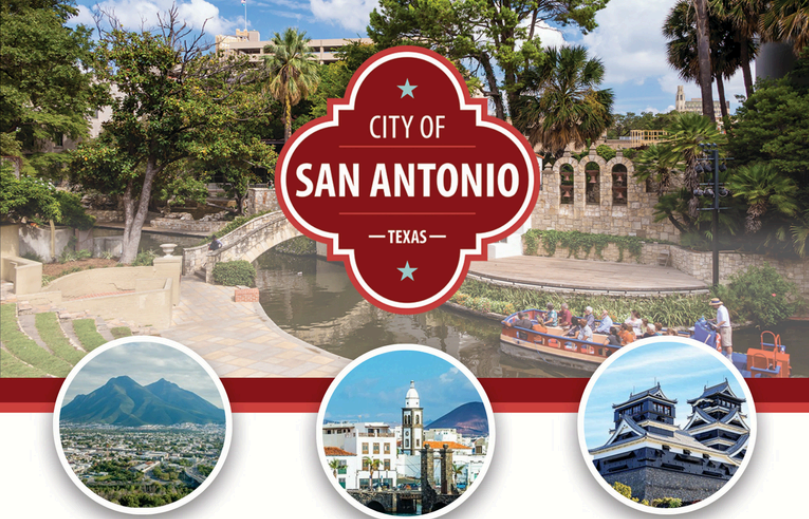
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