

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Jake Sullivan
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear National Security Advisor Sullivan:

We write to acknowledge the important progress made by the Biden administration to ensure that our national security and foreign policy workforce reflects the diversity of the American public. By prioritizing policies that provide opportunities for all Americans to serve our country, including individuals from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, the Biden administration has tapped into the comparative advantage of our nation to strengthen our national security. Although more work remains, we are appreciative of your efforts to create a more inclusive government.

It has been just over three years since President Biden signed the National Security Memorandum on [Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships](#) (NSM-3), which, among other things, established the Biden administration's policy "to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a national security imperative, in order to ensure critical perspectives and talents are represented in the national security workforce." NSM-3 created a new Interagency Working Group on the National Security Workforce ("NSM-3 Working Group") tasked with 1) identifying proposals to more effectively recruit and retain national security employees, 2) improving the ability of the national security workforce to attract and accommodate individuals with disabilities, and 3) assessing reforms to eliminate bias in the security clearance process, among other actions.

Since the issuance of NSM-3, and consistent with other government-wide initiatives with similar goals,¹ the Biden administration has made [tangible progress](#) in achieving a strengthened national security workforce that more fully reflects the country it serves, including by:

- Convening the [first-ever meeting](#) between a U.S. national security advisor and leadership from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to discuss recruitment of talent from HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions;
- Significantly expanding the number of paid internships and fellowships at the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Defense, providing more opportunities to a larger pool of young people;
- Hiring more chief diversity officers and senior advisors on workplace safety and harassment, which can promote transparency and accountability within agencies;
- Creating a Retention Unit within the State Department to collect and analyze data on employee attrition and retention; and
- Establishing a Disability Resource Center in USAID to better support current and prospective employees with disabilities.

We applaud these efforts, which demonstrate the Biden administration's commitment to supporting America's diverse national security and foreign policy workforce. As you seek to build off these

¹ These initiatives include Executive Order 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, and Executive Order 14100, Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors.

successes in the coming year, we offer the following recommendations, consistent with the principles and requirements found in NSM-3:

- **Publicly and Regularly Release an NSM-3 Progress Report.** NSM-3 correctly acknowledges that “the revitalization of our national security and foreign policy workforce requires a recommitment to the highest standards of transparency.” Section 9 of NSM-3 directed you to provide a report to the President on implementation of the memorandum by February 2023, with the report being made public “to the maximum extent possible.” To date, no such report has been made public. We urge its prompt release. Additionally, we encourage you to make public the annual NSM-3 Working Group reports required under Section 3(d).
- **Ensure Full Participation of the National Security Community.** While your February 2024 fact sheet marking the third anniversary of NSM-3 included useful updates on the actions taken by several agencies to implement NSM-3, information on several agencies from the NSM-3 Working Group was missing, most notably the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We have concerns that their absence reflects reluctance to implement NSM-3, and we recommend that you take all necessary actions to ensure their meaningful engagement.
- **Maintain and Institutionalize Agency Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers (CDIOs).** The administration should not shy away from ensuring that every agency has a senior-level CDIO reporting directly to a Secretary-level official. CDIOs can play valuable roles in assisting agency leadership with identifying policies and practices that create barriers to recruiting and maintaining an engaged and representative workforce. These non-political roles should be filled by individuals with substantive experience in organizational management and a demonstrated understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility issues. To promote greater transparency and support for the use of CDIOs, the administration should create an interagency federal CDIO council. In addition, to ensure that CDIO functions are sustained, the administration should promptly fill current vacancies.
- **Prioritize Accountability.** Holding perpetrators of bullying, discrimination, and harassment accountable is critical to ensuring a safe workplace for all employees, regardless of demographic background. Underrepresented groups and others on the periphery of power tend to be the most vulnerable to abuse. We recommend that the NSM-3 Working Group prioritize developing and strengthening concrete accountability mechanisms, such as:
 - Ensuring that sexual harassment policies are clear and consistent across agencies;
 - Expanding the use of full-time Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counselors, consistent with [EEO Management Directive-110](#);
 - Promoting government-wide bystander intervention training; and
 - Developing public facing “Workforce Dashboards” that detail demographics across career fields and grade levels.
- **Promote Efforts to Reduce Religious Identity Bias.** While the administration has committed to regularly analyzing data on diversity trends within organizations, people of faith or no faith have no way to voluntarily disclose when they fall under the protected class of religion. As a result, agencies are unable to analyze religion-related (disaggregated) data to identify barriers for recruitment, retention and promotion to ensure its workforce is truly representative. Inclusive America, in partnership with Muslim Americans in Public Service, has proposed an [executive order](#) to address this and related challenges to combating discrimination on the basis of religious belief and affiliation.

While none of these recommendations will lead to results overnight, the challenges are too great to ignore. Demographic data continues to show that senior leadership in [national security](#) and [foreign policy](#) institutions is not reflective of the American people. We reject the notion that women, people of color, individuals with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other underrepresented groups are less willing to serve the public, and we applaud the Biden administration for its work to address these

gaps. Through sustained efforts, we can achieve a national security and foreign policy workforce that meaningfully represents the U.S. population, which will make our country stronger.

Sincerely,

AAPI Victory Alliance
Black Professionals in International Affairs
Foreign Policy for America
glifaa - Pride in Foreign Affairs Agencies
Human Rights First
Inclusive America
Muslim Americans in Public Service
Out in National Security
Truman Center
Veterans for American Ideals