

**William R. Rivkin Award Presentation
By Charles H. Rivkin
At the American Foreign Service Association
Wednesday, October 1, 2025**

Good afternoon, everyone – and thank you to AFSA for your warm welcome.

It's always a privilege for me to stand among former colleagues of this department – our finest representatives of America to the world.

The William R. Rivkin Award is named for my father, and this event summons memories of his all-too-brief life:

His faith in this nation and its promise...the legacy he left to me, my family, and many more.

And when my mother and my godfather, Hubert Humphrey, established this award in 1968 (after my father's death at Post), it was done in that spirit – that faith in America – that belief in the decent people doing the hard, unsung, but vital work of development and diplomacy.

At the heart of that work is the ideal of constructive dissent – a notion that forces us to ask ourselves:

Do we love our country enough to not only serve its interests, but sometimes question its decisions?

Do we believe in diplomacy enough to not only advance our policies worldwide, but challenge our policymakers here at home?

Do we have enough faith in our democracy to not only uphold its mission in eras of promise, but hold its leaders accountable in moments of turmoil?

Answering these questions is rarely easy.

But stepping forward when events demand it...acting with initiative, with keen insights, with knowledge, with responsibility – That is the backbone of public service that actually serves the public good.

That is the calling embodied by this year's courageous honorees.

They saw what was happening at USAID and sounded the alarm on what that would mean for development assistance and our diplomacy...for people's health and security, at home and overseas.

They saw firsthand how USAID programs safeguard U.S. security and save lives.

And they understood, better than any of us, what could transpire if those programs were to end.

So they made a decision.

One, frankly, fraught with risk.

But one that principle called for:

To utilize the dissent channel as it was intended.

To make their voices heard and their views known at the highest echelons of this department.

To spotlight the reality of how decisions made in Washington ripple out to posts a world away.

That cable may not have yielded the change its authors sought.

But sometimes, that's not the sole purpose of dissent.

Sometimes, spelling out well-reasoned, fact-based disagreements serves as a marker to:

Speak out against injustice wherever we can.

Speak up for what you believe whenever we must.

Seek accountability for those in positions of public trust.

Serve with conscience, integrity, determination, honor.

The recipients of this year's William R. Rivkin Award embody that spirit.

Please join me in recognizing them now:

- **Eric Burkett**
- **Andrea Capellán**
- **Andrea Cristancho**
- **Jessica Carlson**
- **Abtin Forghani**
- **Sam Kraegel**
- **R. Clark Pearson**
- **Joshua Schramm**
- **Meghan Waters**
- **Heather Wirick**

Thank you all for your commitment to the cause of our country.

Thank you for continuing to carry the torch of American diplomacy and American values.

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From the American Academy of Diplomacy