



Information on the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs (WIFA)

The Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs (WIFA) is a by-invitation-only organization of foreign affairs and national security professionals, with backgrounds in and out of government, that meets monthly for luncheons and virtual programs, September through May. Founded in 1961, under the auspices of Ambassador Loy Henderson and former Secretaries of State James Byrnes, Dean Acheson, and Christian Herter, WIFA has for 65 years served as a distinguished forum for invited speakers on serious contemporary issues in all aspects of international relations. Allen W. Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the institute's first vice president, said he believed the new organization had no need to publish position papers or sponsor academic studies, as Washington was awash with them. The Institute, he said, should be "dedicated to discussion and dialogue."

Former USAID Administrator Prof. J. Brian Atwood took over as WIFA Chairman in October 2025, succeeding Ambassador Tom Pickering. Former Congresswoman Connie Morella serves as WIFA President. Roughly a third of members served as senior officials in the State Department. Another third had careers in other government branches and agencies, including the uniformed services, the intelligence community, the Defense Department, the Agency for International Development, and the Congress. The remaining third have had careers with international organizations, NGOs, the law, international finance, media/ journalism, and other private sector areas.

Luncheons, held at the Cosmos Club, and virtual programs feature presentations by prominent current or former policy makers, practitioners, experts, and scholars; and both venues provide opportunities for participating members to engage in question-and-answer sessions. Speakers over the past year have addressed topics that included Israel-Palestine, Korea, Iran nuclear issues, NATO at 75, Hungary under Orban, tariffs and trade, China and the information age, conflict prevention and counterterrorism, and American soft power. The concluding event of our program year featured a discussion with Ambassador Pickering and his perspectives on 70 years of U.S. foreign policy.

In addition to the luncheons and virtual programs, WIFA also holds an annual evening dinner. The evening dinner usually held in May, and a special afternoon event in January are the only events to which WIFA members can be accompanied by a guest. WIFA meetings are otherwise for members only (no guests allowed) and are strictly off the record. No recordings in any form are permitted.

Present Annual dues -- \$575 annually for resident members and \$200 for non-resident members living more than 50 miles from Washington, D.C. Dues cover all of WIFA's private meetings.

The WIFA website www.wifadc.org offers further information that may be of interest, including lists of past speakers. The WIFA office may also be contacted on wifadc@gmail.com. Further information on the Cosmos Club can be viewed at www.cosmosclub.org.