USAID Alumni Association

November - December 2026 Newsletter

Note from the UAA Board

This month marks the 65th anniversary of USAID's founding—a milestone that invites us to reflect on the extraordinary contributions of the agency and the generations of people who dedicated their careers to advancing its mission.

Congressman Walkinshaw acknowledged as much in his tribute in the Congressional Record highlighting USAID's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize by former Liberian President and Nobel laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: "*For more than six decades, USAID represented the best of American leadership abroad. Established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, the agency helped prevent famine, combat infectious diseases, strengthen democratic institutions, and rebuild communities devastated by war and natural disasters. Its work saved millions of lives and advanced the cause of peace around the world.*"

While our work within USAID has been disrupted, our community is very much alive. We saw that clearly at our recent Annual General Meeting. This year's AGM was more than an opportunity to reconnect. It was a celebration of the people, experience, and shared commitment that define our community. We recognized inspiring leaders and the important contributions of our Alumni of the Year. We had conversations about how the UAA can help shape what comes next in U.S. foreign assistance, how we can work more closely with our new sister organizations, and how we can strengthen our regional and international networks.

The AGM reinforced the value of inclusivity and the importance of reflecting the full breadth of the people and experiences that have contributed to USAID's mission. We will continue looking at ways to make our membership more representative and inclusive, reaching colleagues across different generations, nationalities, and geographic locations.

The AGM also reinforced an important point: the future of the UAA—and the value it brings to its members and the broader development community—will depend on all of us. The Board can provide direction and create opportunities, but the success of the association ultimately rests on the engagement, ideas, and contributions of its members.

We ask everyone who attended the AGM both in person and virtually to take a few minutes to complete the AGM Survey and share your feedback.

We also invite you to step forward and get involved. See the article below.

The UAA was built by its members, and its next chapter will be written by them as well.

We have an extraordinary community, a wealth of experience, and an opportunity to make a meaningful difference. Let's make the most of it.

USAID's 65 years of achievement live on through the people who carried out its mission. Our community remains strong and committed. And its future is ours to shape.

Announcement of the New Board

We are pleased to welcome three new members to the UAA Board: Lela Kerashvili, Andrew Plitt, and Nitin Madhav. We look forward to the experience, perspectives, and contributions they will bring to the Board.

Jeanne Briggs and Chris Milligan will serve as Board Co-Chairs. The Board extends its sincere appreciation to Tony Chan for his service as Co-Chair and his contributions to the Association.

We also wish to recognize Christine Sheckler for her dedicated service over the past year, particularly her important work strengthening UAA’s regional networks and her contributions as Board Secretary. We welcome Carol Dabbs as the new Board

Secretary and thank her for her extraordinary service as UAA Treasurer. The Board is grateful to James Redder for assuming the important responsibilities of UAA Treasurer.



Front row: Tony Chan, Nitin Madhav, Andy Plitt, Jeannie Briggs
Back row: Chris Milligan, Steve Haykin, Alicia Dinerstein, Tony Pryor
(missing: Lela Kerashvili)

Calendar of Upcoming UAA Events

New! November 17, 12 noon to 1:30 PM, Development Issues Committee webinar with One Earth Partners on "A Global Assessment of the Loss of USAID's Environment and Climate Programming" Click here for more information.
New! November 22 UAA Friendsgiving (Alexandria, VA) See details below!!
New! December 16 Meet-up event for Hamilton (National Theater)
New! January 27, 2027, 11:45 am-2:00 pm, Development Dialogue at DACOR hosted by DACOR & UAA, "Guns are not Enough: Foreign Aid in the National Interest" with Andrew Natsios, Former Administrator USAID.

UAA Annual General Meeting

Thanks to all who attended the 2026 AGM in-person and on-line and participated so enthusiastically with questions, comments and

suggestions on the topics at hand. Read the AGM Report here and watch the video here.



The meeting kicked off with a warm welcome from the Vice President of the Center for Global Development (CGD), Markus Goldstein, who briefly reviewed CGD's own work following the destruction of USAID. Next was a stimulating discussion about the future of foreign assistance between USAID former Administrator Henrietta Fore (participating virtually) and former head of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), Alice Albright. Susan Reichle, former USAID Counselor, expertly moderated the session, which clarified the range of groups and organizations that are fleshing out key issues and recommendations for foreign assistance in the immediate and longer-term future. They also suggested ways in which UAA members could contribute to the process given our decades of practical implementation experience in various geographic regions.





The rest of the day was dedicated to the proposed UAA Strategic Framework. The UAA Board presented it to members, describing the activities aimed at consulting with the membership about their priorities and needs.





Following presentations by Steve Haykin on UAA's 2026 activities and accomplishments, and by Alicia Dinerstein on the structure and rationale for the Framework itself, the discussion session was moderated by Board Co-Chair Tony Chan. The remainder of time before lunch was spent on feedback and suggestions related to the new Framework.



The two sessions after lunch began with a discussion of aligned organizations formed in the wake of USAID's closing, which are critically important UAA partners, and with whom UAA must collaborate and coordinate to avoid duplication and to advance common goals.

The final session -- an excellent panel of former USAID staff who live in various regions of the U.S. and an FSN from Bangladesh – helped

to broaden the perspective and advice from the largest component of USAID's former workforce living throughout the world.



As always, the most popular session among UAA members came at the end with the presentations to three former USAID staff of "Outstanding Alumni of the Year" awards for their contributions to their communities after the end of their service with USAID. Susan Reichle, John Lovaas and Mohammed Ashraful Haque were all recognized for their exceptional work in their communities. They make us all proud to be associated with them. Read their profiles at the end of the Newsletter.

Chris Milligan, Board Co-Chair, wrapped up the AGM by thanking all the participants, and thanking CGD again for their hospitality and generous assistance. He also welcomed the three new Board members: Andy Plitt, Nitin Madhav and Lela Kerashvili.

Enjoy photos of the AGM audience below and a more complete photo album here.





Beverly Johnston, Mary Harvey and Mary Alice Kleinjan



Dawn Liberi and Ruth Buckley





Jed Meline, Andrew Plitt and Bayley Winder

Jim Michel, Tom Staal and Bambi Arellano





Rachel Peniston, Beverly Johnston and Anne Peniston

Denise Rollins, Sharon Pauling, Gail Spence and Pam Foster





Nancy Tumavick, Roberta Mahoney, Anne Aarnes, Howard Sumka and David McCloud

Larissa Komarova and Chris Crowley





George Ingram, Rachel Peniston and Joy Riggs-Perla

Paula Feeney and Mellen Duffy Tanamly



Don Niss, Mike Henning and Will Elliott

What's New on the Website

In Memoriam:

Eugene "Gene" Szepesy, Christopher Paul Kosnik, Steven Derrick Orr

News About USAID

Unless otherwise stated, the links below are for information purposes only and do not convey the endorsement of the UAA, its members, or its Board. See:
1) **Bulletin Board**, **including Statements from UAA about Current Events**
2) **Articles**
3) **Podcasts & Recorded Media**

Bulletin Board

- On Wednesday, November 18, 2026, Bretton Woods Institute for Strategic Leadership fireside chat with former USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios about his new book, *Guns are Not Enough: Foreign Aid in the National Interest*. Click here for more information and a Request to Join (subject to host approval).

- On Thursday, November 19, 2026, SID-US Annual Reception in Washington, DC, UAA members invited at a discounted rate. Click here for details and registration.

- USAID Office of Inspector General released its annual report: Top Management Challenges Facing U.S. Foreign Assistance in Fiscal Year 2027.

- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Minority Report, "Whose Interests? The Costs and Conflicts of Trump's Foreign Policy." October 2026

Articles

(Click on the "Articles" link above for more articles posted on our website. Click on the boldface item headings there and below for a hyperlink to the full articles.)

USAID News Story Tracker: USAID Media

- The Why and How of Foreign Aid. By Dean Karlan, former chief economist for USAID, *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* Fall 2026

- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Shaheen Releases New Report Detailing Trump Administration's Attacks on Programs Supporting Women and Girls Worldwide. 30 Oct. 2026

- Democracy Has No Finish Line: Lessons from Nicaragua. Speaking Out. By Lynn Northcutt Vega, The Foreign Service Journal, Nov.-Dec. 2026 issue

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- State Department seeks mid-career hires to join its ranks after widespread layoffs. By Jory Heckman, Government Executive, 30 Oct 2026

- We must keep our promise to Nicaraguan exiles. Opinion. By Lynn Northcutt Vega, South Florida SunSentinal, 28 Oct. 2026

- "For six decades, USAID represented the best of American leadership abroad." quote from Rep. Walkinshaw upon entering into the Congressional Record the Nomination of USAID for the Nobel Peace Prize. From the U.S. Congressional Record, Oct. 26, 2026, pp. E1126-E1127

- Aid on the Hill Releases Policy Paper on Foreign Assistance, US Soft Power in a Post-USAID World. Aid on the Hill, 27 Oct 2026

- Introducing the US Agency for Foreign Strategic Assistance. By James Kunder, Devex, 14 Oct 2026

- USAID Nomination for Nobel Peace Prize. From Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and herself a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 29 Jan 2026

Podcast & Recorded Media

- A Hanukkah Note from Art Fell, retired USAID SFS: a book review of his Jewish humor *Tzimmes (and don't forget the cheesecake and the strudel*). By Mia Diercks, 2014

- Why Republicans turned on USAID. Andrew Natsios, the former USAID administrator and Republican politician, joins Devex's Theory of Change podcast to explain how U.S. development programs are hamstrung by external pressures. By Michael Igoe, 03 November 2026

2026 UAA Friendsgiving!

UAA alumni are invited to bring their family or a guest to our second Friendsgiving celebration. As we reflect on the 65th anniversary of USAID's founding and the enormously consequential recent mid-term elections, it is an apt time to gather with friends and family. We are planning a potluck event to catch up, network, share adventures and plans and celebrate our strength as a community. Bring your favorite family fall/winter holiday dish. We'll take care of the meat so please consider our vegan and vegetarian family members as you plan! This is a free event for UAA members. We also encourage you to bring or invite those eligible to become members.

Last Name Begins With	Dish to Bring
A to E	Dessert
F to J	Side
K to O	Bread / Stuffing
P to T	Salad
U to Z	Appetizer

Date: Sunday, November 22, 2026
Time: 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Location: Kingstowne Snyder Center, 6450 S Van Dorn St, Alexandria, VA 22315. Parking is available and the building is easily accessible. Closest Metro is Van Dorn Station or Franconia Springfield. https://maps.app.goo.gl/84WHUX2iW3q1gDgz6

Dress: Casual

RSVP: Please RSVP with notional dish and number of people no later than November 16 so that we can place orders and plan accordingly.

Click here to register

Involment in UAA

UAA Focus Groups on Ways to Engage

Between November 5th and 12th 2026, UAA teams working on strategy pillars 1 & 3 led focus groups with UAA members and members of the USAID alumni community. The sessions were intended to get input from members and potential members on how UAA can best engage and support its members, understand what people see as the value of UAA, and help us update our engagement approach and UAA's dues structures, which haven't been updated in some time.

The response to the invitation to join the focus groups was incredible. Over 100 people from across the U.S. and around the world expressed interest, and many joined the sessions. These were incredibly rich discussions with clear recommendations to help us further build and support the community. Recommendations included hosting regular discussion/networking sessions (including on-line sessions with FSNs and others); providing connections to resources on jobs, career pivots and psychosocial support; the critical role of UAA in educating the public on the importance of USAID's work and amplifying the voices of alumni to policy makers; and the importance of UAA in establishing partnerships with other organizations. These recommendations will be used to shape UAA's activities and regular engagement opportunities.

Help Shape UAA's Next Chapter — Get Involved!

As discussed at our recent Annual General Meeting, UAA is moving forward with an ambitious strategic framework, and we're eager to involve more members in bringing it to life! There are many ways to contribute, whether you have a few hours to spare or are interested in an ongoing role. We'd love to know what activities interest you and what skills and experience you can offer. Please take a few minutes to complete our Volunteer Skills and Interests Form. Completing the form is simply an expression of interest, not a commitment. We look forward to working with more of you to shape UAA's future!

Regional Events

Pennsylvania

USAID receives Peace Maker award from World Affairs Council of Harrisburg

The World Affairs Council of Harrisburg (WACH) and the Eisenhower Institute for Democracy held the 2026 International Peace Symposium on September 19 at Gettysburg College. Held every year since 9/11, the theme this year was whether a return to soft power could help America reclaim both its moral and military might at a time when the U.S. is at odds with allies over tariffs and engaged in what many fear is another forever war in the Middle East. Following the two panels, WACH gave its annual Peace Maker awards to three individuals and three organizations including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



L to R: Margie Winter, WACH Staff; Diana Putman; Dr. Joyce Davis, President & CEO of WACH

Diana Putman spoke on the first panel about soft power through development. She asked the audience to imagine the world previously when development and humanitarian assistance was provided by USAID and millions around the world knew the handshake logo and understood that the American people cared about them, compared to now when the PRC logo often is first on the scene after a disaster. Diana also summarized the impacts of USAID's work over 63 years and reminded people how USAID's many programs also benefited the American people.

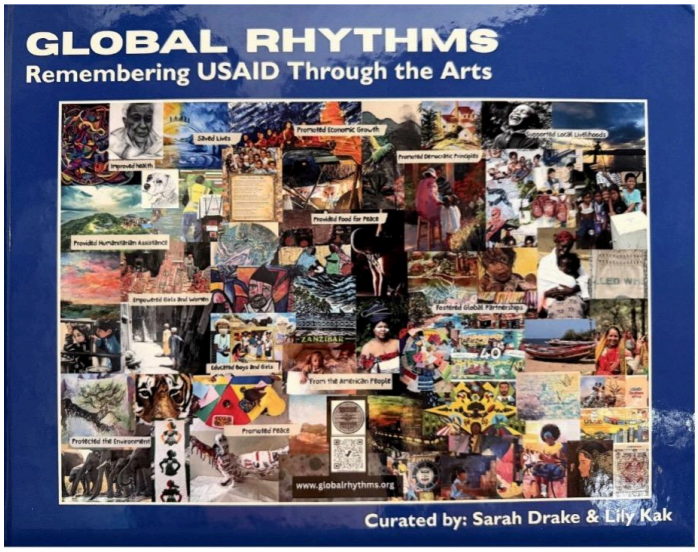
She concluded by quoting Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield: during a visit to Congo, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield had praised USAID's role as development diplomats: "Thank you for a wonderful opportunity to dialogue with the Congolese community. Your relationships contribute to our outreach in Congo."

When she accepted the Peace Maker award on behalf of USAID, Diana's remarks honored the thousands of USAID employees who contributed to improving the globe over the decades. She focused especially on our Foreign Service Nationals and thanked the families who worked with us, often in difficult and dangerous countries, for

their support and their contributions as development diplomats as well.

Additions to the Bibliography of USAID Authors: Global Rhythms

The UAA will continue to collect and publicize information about books written by USAID FSOs, FSNs, and family members adding to our on-line collection. One more has been added to the Bibliography of USAID Authors:



Global Rhythms: Remembering USAID Through the Arts is a multi-media exhibition that speaks to the core of humanity, transcending cultural and geographical borders. The paintings, photographs, and poems weave a story of cultural and social connections and global and local partnerships that have built a better world. It celebrates the work of Americans who have promoted peace, saved lives, improved living conditions and upheld democratic principles with passion and compassion. Fifty former USAID staff, their implementing partners, and their families and friends came together in a shared belief that USAID's legacy – its reach, its humanity, its enduring global impact – must not be allowed to fade in silence. They turned to visual art and poetry as vessels of memory to bear witness through creative expression, offering works shaped by pride in lives of service and global impact, by grief for a way of life abruptly lost, and by longing for friendships and partnerships forged across continents. This beautiful coffee table-sized book of paintings, photographs and poems, weave a story of cultural and social connections and global and local partnerships that have built a better world. Compiled by Lily and Sarah Drake, it was dedicated to the John F Kennedy Library in Boston on Sept. 14, 2026. Click here to see more of this artwork. The book is available at Lulu.

Lily Kak's 24 year career at USAID was abruptly ended 5 months before her expected retirement. She was team lead for Newborn Health in the Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition. She has used her lifelong passion for art to document, celebrate and

preserve the legacy of USAID and the values of service, partnership and shared humanity that defined USAID's mission.

Profiles of 2026 UAA Awardees

PROFILE: John Lovaas



John Lovaas was awarded the USAID Alumni Association's 2026 Alumni of the Year Award in recognition of his extraordinary record of civic engagement, community development, and public service, and for his decades of leadership in strengthening the community of Reston, VA. The UAA honors the lasting impact of his service which demonstrates that the values of USAID—listening, coalition-building, inclusion, persistence, and commitment to human dignity—can continue to strengthen communities and improve lives long after a career in public service.

Since retiring in September 1994 from USAID's Senior Foreign Service, John Lovaas for over three decades has built institutions, strengthened local democracy, expanded access to healthy food, supported vulnerable neighbors, and advanced public accountability. John's most enduring accomplishment is the Reston Farmers Market, which he founded in 1998 and managed through 2024. Under him, the market became a widely acclaimed community institution: a marketplace, a food-access program, a donation pipeline, and a trusted public gathering place. He introduced participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), making fresh local food accessible to lower-income shoppers, and he arranged for gleaners from a community service NGO to collect unsold produce from vendors each Saturday, providing fresh food to a pantry for the homeless. In 2020, during COVID-19 when many markets closed, John kept the Reston Market operating with carefully executed safety precautions. Many shoppers said the market was the only place they shopped for months.

John and his wife Fran, now married for 61 years, served breakfast monthly on Sunday mornings for 15 years at the Reston Interfaith shelter (now known as Cornerstones), stopping only when pandemic restrictions prevented volunteer service.

John has been a persistent voice for informed civic participation. Since 2010 his periodic "Independent Progressive" column has run in the Fairfax Connection, a biweekly community newspaper. For 15 years (2000-2015) he was host and producer of the "Reston Impact" community television program, which featured local issues and forums for Congressional, Virginia legislative, and county supervisor elections.

As Vice President of the Reston Association Board from 1997-2000, he spearheaded the incorporation of new neighborhoods into the Association and led efforts to create recreation facilities. As President of the Reston Citizens Association (2002-2006), he led the campaign to create a new branch community center to serve the northern half of Reston.

John's commitment extended to environmental stewardship and public accountability. He served on the board (2011-2014) of the newly created NGO the Friends of Wolf Trap (National Park for the Performing Arts) which promotes the use of natural and historical resources at the park. In 2015 and 2016, following the unprovoked shooting death of a resident by a Fairfax County police officer, he served on the county's Ad Hoc Commission for Review of Police Practices, where he helped recommend and draft a proposal to create a Civilian Review Committee, which Fairfax County implemented.

What makes John's contributions after leaving public service particularly noteworthy is their continuity, breadth, and practical innovation. He identified needs, organized people, strengthened institutions, and stayed with the work for years, often decades. John Lovaas offers a compelling story: remain engaged, work locally, build trust, and keep creating opportunities for others to thrive.

PROFILE: Ashraful Haque

Md. Ashraful Haque was awarded the USAID Alumni Association's 2026 Alumni of the Year Award in recognition of his outstanding leadership and enduring commitment to environmental conservation and development in Bangladesh, and for carrying forward the knowledge, relationships, and values cultivated through his service with USAID. His example demonstrates the lasting impact of USAID's investment in people and the power of USAID alumni to sustain and advance that legacy long after programs end.

Ashraful Haque, during five years with USAID/Bangladesh (2020 – August 2025), as Project Management Specialist/Senior Environment Advisor, managed a $100M+ portfolio across forestry, fisheries, and



climate resilience. In 2024 he was elected for a two-year term, continuing to today, as the Organizing Secretary of the Institution of Foresters Bangladesh's National Executive Committee. IFB is the apex national professional body for foresters. His was the first elected national committee, chosen by 1,100 voting members, and it focuses on institution building, strengthening national forest policy dialogue, and expanding engagement with young foresters.

In August 2025, after his departure from USAID, Ashraful co-founded Foresight Advisory, a small consulting firm with four former Foreign Service Nationals from the Mission to keep expertise and the professional network active after their USAID positions ended. The firm focuses on climate resilience, nature-based solutions, sustainable finance, and clean energy. In their first year, they completed several assignments with various partners. The firm remains registered, though its engagements are limited as most co-founders have taken up full-time positions.

In September 2025, he joined GIZ, Germany's foreign aid agency, for one year as full-time Advisor in the Forestry and Biodiversity cluster where he helped advance Bangladesh's coastal and marine protected area governance and blue economy agenda. Ashraful's focus was protecting mangroves, swamp forests, and marine protected areas. Much of that work was with the same ministries and national leaders he had partnered with at USAID, now under a different donor's flag. The Bangladesh Government appointed him in July 2026 as one of ten members of the country's first National Wildlife Commission. Ashraful remains a member today.

In September 2026, he joined the World Bank Group full time as a Natural Resources Management Specialist, in the Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy unit of the South Asia Region, where he works across the Bank's natural resources investments in Bangladesh.

Ashraful wants to share what he has learned firsthand. The money can run out. The USAID Mission can close. The badge can be handed back at the front gate. None of that touches the actual thing USAID built into you, which is a standard, for how you design a program, how you hold yourself accountable to results, how you show up for the people you work with and for. USAID's legacy in a place like Bangladesh was never only going to live in the programs it funded directly. Some of it was always going to live in the people it trained, and in what those people continue to build together. He wants the

UAA alumni community to know USAID may be gone from Bangladesh, but the people it shaped are still here, and still at work. The Mission closed. The work didn't.

PROFILE: Susan Reichle



Susan Reichle was awarded the USAID Alumni Association's 2026 Alumna of the Year Award in recognition of her extraordinary leadership and enduring commitment to advancing development, empowering young people, strengthening the USAID community at a critical time of need, and preserving the knowledge and values of U.S. foreign assistance. The UAA honors her exceptional leadership, mentorship, advocacy, and unwavering commitment to public service and improving the lives of others.

In her 26 years with USAID's Foreign Service, Susan was posted to Haiti, Nicaragua, Russia, Colombia and USAID Headquarters. After serving as Mission Director in Colombia, she returned to Washington to lead the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau as Acting Assistant Administrator (which included oversight of OFDA – USAID's Office of Disaster Assistance) and the Policy, Planning, and Learning Bureau as Assistant to the Administrator. In her final assignment, she served as Counselor to USAID, the position held by the Agency's foremost Senior Foreign Service Officer.

After retiring from USAID in 2017, Susan was President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Youth Foundation (IYF) for seven years. IYF is a global non-profit organization connecting young people with economic opportunities, job readiness, and life skills training. At IYF, Susan strengthened its monitoring, evaluation and research capabilities and its commitment to organizational capability and data-driven accountability.

In February 2025, Susan co-founded the Aid Transition Alliance (AidTA) with three other former USAID FSOs, Jeanne Briggs, Alicia Dinerstein and Ambassador Erin McKee. This volunteer initiative focused first on combatting the disinformation by DOGE about USAID, and then broadened its efforts to include mental health and wellbeing support through the KonTerra Group, Knowledge Rescue in partnership with UAA, and career transition support in partnership

with Georgetown University and others. Susan has documented the development community's response through her writing for the Foreign Service Journal and other media.

Susan chairs the Board of the Coalition of Racial and Ethnic Equity in Development (CREED). She is an Executive Committee member of Aid on the Hill (AOTH) to support its grassroots education work, along with support for the One Aid community and other groups that formed as a result of the dismantling of USAID. She is on the Executive Committee of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN). She is also a member of the American Academy of Diplomacy and the National Security Leaders of America (NSL4A).

Susan actively supports the future of foreign assistance through working groups including Aspen Global Prosperity, Security and Development Strategy Group (Aspen Institute), and the Columbia-Rice Foreign Assistance Task Force. Her decades of engagement in global development and her vast network enable her to bring development practitioners together.

Susan Reichle's broad skills, experience and leadership are playing a key role in planning the future of global development.

Make Your 2026 UAA Membership Contribution

USAID Alumni Association

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