

**Statement of Lee Satterfield**  
**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State,**  
**Educational and Cultural Affairs**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Tuesday, July 27, 2021**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I am honored to be considered by the Senate for this important position, and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me.

I would like to thank my family: my husband, Patrick, our sons Jack and Conor, and all of my supportive extended family, friends, and colleagues.

I have worked in various capacities in the consequential field of international engagement for over a decade and dedicated the majority of my almost 30-year career to public service.

If confirmed, it would be the honor of a lifetime to lead a Bureau whose mission is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people around the world through educational, professional, and cultural exchanges.

My experience has prepared me to carry on the proud tradition of excellence at the Bureau. As President of Meridian International Center, I have led efforts to connect leaders through cultural exchange and collaboration, driving solutions to shared global challenges and fostering international cooperation for the past six years.

I am a passionate champion of advancing U.S. policy priorities through people-to-people exchanges. Having previously served in ECA as Deputy Assistant Secretary and Acting Assistant Secretary, I know these programs of engagement are an integral part of our diplomacy which President Biden has placed at the center of U.S. foreign policy, and I hold the many dedicated professionals who make these programs successful in the highest regard.

Public diplomacy is a strategy, and like foreign policy professionals, public diplomacy practitioners must survey the global terrain to ascertain America's natural competitive advantages in meeting threats and challenges. Those advantages are numerous.

- The United States has the highest-quality, most open and diverse system of higher education in the world. We are, and must remain, the destination of choice for the best and brightest students. We can both welcome legitimate international students and protect our national interests from malign influence.
- The United States economy is infused with an entrepreneurial spirit that attracts, inspires, and innovates.
- American culture is the most pervasive and influential popular culture in the world.
- English is the language of the world, opening doors and minds.
- American values are the foundation of a world that rejects violence and extremism and that embraces liberty, individual dignity, and democracy.

ECA exchanges are purposefully designed to leverage all those inherent strengths of our country. Exchanges have an unparalleled ability to convey and share the American experience, ultimately making our country more secure and globally competitive.

As set forth in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, we are engaged in a global competition for influence and power with authoritarian states such as Russia and China. To meet this current challenge, our most powerful assets remain those that have guided and strengthened our nation since the beginning - our democratic principles.

If confirmed, I will:

- First, thoughtfully evaluate conditions for scaling up in-person exchanges prioritizing health, safety, and welfare and continue building on lessons learned from ECA's successful pivot to virtual and hybrid programs during the pandemic.

- I will ensure ECA programs represent promote and support equity, diversity, and inclusion while also advancing those principles within the workforce.
- I will demonstrate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars by measuring and evaluating program performance through a data-driven approach. As Secretary Blinken stated, “Among the best investments we make are in our exchange programs.”
- I will continue ECA activities that benefit the American people and U.S. economy, contributing directly to local economies and fostering business and educational opportunities, and I will promote those opportunities to US citizens.
- I will build on ECA’s robust global alumni network and continue upgrading alumni engagement platforms. Successful exchange programs are not one and done events, but rather an initial investment in foreign audiences and a community of potential foreign policy allies. One in three current world leaders are part of the over 1.5 million alumni of ECA exchanges.

If confirmed, I will aim to strengthen people-to-people ties and advance our country's foreign policy goals under the leadership of Secretary Blinken and in consultation with Congress. Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.