

**U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Nominations Hearing
June 7, 2022**

**Opening Statement of Amanda Bennett
Nominated to be Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Agency for Global Media**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee for welcoming me here today.

It is an honor to be considered by this Committee for the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), and I thank its Members and their staff for taking the time to meet with me.

I would like to take a moment to recognize my husband, Don Graham, and my son, Terry, here with me today, as well as acknowledge my daughter Georgia, stepchildren Liza, Laura, Will, and Molly, my late husband Terence Foley, and mentors Sandra Mims Rowe and Chuck Camp. I am grateful for their generosity, support, and encouragement.

We are at a critical moment in history. Journalism and public diplomacy alike are targeted as never before by authoritarian regimes using mis- and dis- information to undermine those seeking credible, fact-based, and unbiased coverage of the world around them.

Journalism has been my life. At 11 years old, I published my first newspaper story – about the day my father told me my newborn sister had Down Syndrome (she’s now 60). I began my professional career as a French-speaking journalist in Ottawa, Ontario. I spent 23 years at The Wall Street Journal where I became only the second WSJ correspondent in China, experiencing life in an authoritarian state where journalists and sources were watched and detained. I went on to lead newsrooms in Oregon, and in Kentucky and Pennsylvania where I became the top editor, before returning to financial journalism at Bloomberg News.

I have been a reporter, editor, manager, and news organization leader. I shared two Pulitzer Prizes, including the much-coveted Public Service prize. I have also spent significant time contributing to nonprofit and journalistic and foreign-policy institutions, as well as mentoring the next generations of news leaders.

Most recently, during my four years in public service as the Director of Voice of America (VOA), I witnessed extraordinary passion and devotion to mission. I also

saw how much can be accomplished – even in government – by harnessing that passion to surmount obstacles. I am a pragmatic leader and believe organizations work best when things around them work well.

At VOA, I traveled to 22 countries witnessing the depth of China, Russia, and Iran’s misinformation around the world. But more importantly, I also saw people’s hunger for believable, trustworthy information. I realized that the BBC and USAGM networks were, for all practical purposes, the only free press in a huge part of the world.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I would emphasize the strong nonpartisan nature of this agency and focus on the following priorities. I would work to ensure that everything USAGM does supports its mission – as a stable, coordinated, efficient, and transparent organization serving its broadcasters and creating conditions in which truthful journalism can be most effectively practiced.

I would seek to accelerate advances in technology to ensure information can be seen and heard by the people who need it most. Authoritarian regimes are increasingly sophisticated in blocking information, and USAGM needs to become even more sophisticated in breaching those barriers. Playing catch-up can no longer be our only option. We need to look ahead to protect truthful, believable, free news and information from the increasingly rigorous attempts to block it. The best journalism is of no use if people cannot see or hear it.

And I would reaffirm both the mission and the firewall that underpins the worldwide credibility that USAGM’s broadcasters all enjoy. The firewall is essential to that credibility, ensuring editorial independence and protecting USAGM and its journalists from outside influence. As my personal experience confronting state-controlled media taught me, there is nothing more important for USAGM than this independence. Celebrating successes is critical - as is the freedom to expose and explore flaws. Audiences see our example of candor in exercising press freedom in a democratic society, as proof of our credibility. In so many countries, people yearn for the truth - even painful truth.

I do not take this opportunity lightly, nor underestimate its challenges. I am also grateful for the dedicated people at USAGM and its entities who work tirelessly in support of its mission. If confirmed, I pledge to work with them to uphold the highest journalistic standards and work persistently to protect the safety and privacy of both journalists and audiences worldwide.

I also commit to being accessible and transparent and to work collaboratively within government, with external stakeholders, with this Committee and all of Congress in a bipartisan fashion, to ensure USAGM has the support and resources necessary to fulfill its mission and that the agency is held accountable to its obligations.

I am grateful to this Committee for considering my nomination, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you very much.