

MCCAIN INSTITUTE EXPERTS GUIDE



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DR. EVELYN FARKAS

Executive Director

@EvelynNFarkas

Dr. Evelyn N. Farkas, executive director of the McCain Institute, has three decades of experience working on national security and foreign policy in the U.S. executive, legislative branch, private sector and for international organizations overseas. In 2019-2020 she ran to represent New York's 17th Congressional District in the House of Representatives. Previously, she was president of Farkas Global Strategies and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Atlantic Council and national security contributor for NBC/MSNBC. She served from 2012 to 2015 as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia/Ukraine/Eurasia, Balkans, Caucasus and conventional arms control. From 2010 to 2012, she was senior advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and special advisor to the Secretary of Defense for the NATO Summit. She was the executive director of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism and senior fellow at the American Security Project. From 2001 to 2008, she served as a professional staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee responsible for Asia Pacific, Western Hemisphere, Special Operations Command, and policy issues including combatting terrorism and export control.

Expertise:

- National security
- U.S. relations with Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Taiwan, Japan
- Russian influence
- International relations

Medium:

- TV
- Print/Online
- Radio/Podcast
- Op-Ed



KRISTEN LEANDERSON ABRAMS

Chief Program Officer
@AbramsKL

Kristen Leanderson Abrams serves as the McCain Institute's Chief Program Officer, leading the design and delivery of the McCain Institute's Human Rights & Freedom, Democracy, and Leadership programs. Abrams has more than two decades of international human rights program management and policy experience. In previous leadership roles at the McCain Institute, Abrams directed the Combatting Human Trafficking Program, deploying strategic initiatives to secure justice for victims, build the capacity of trafficking response networks, and leverage data and technology to inform trafficking interventions. Before joining the McCain Institute, she provided guidance to non-profits working to end exploitation and promote human rights through a consultancy she founded and ran. She also served as the acting director of the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST). Earlier in her career, Abrams led international pro bono programs at DLA Piper. In that capacity, she developed and implemented interdisciplinary rule of law, economic development, access to justice, and women's rights projects in the United States and throughout Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. While at DLA Piper, Abrams also provided counsel on matters of public international law, political law, and corporate social responsibility. Abrams began her career as a legislative aide in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Expertise:

- Human rights
- Human trafficking; labor, and sex
- Forced labor
- U.S. federal policy on human rights, human trafficking and forced labor
- Due diligence measures
- Supply chain
- Corporate engagement in foreign policy

Medium:

- TV
- Print/Online
- Radio/Podcast
- Op-Ed



LAURA THORNTON

Senior Director, Global Democracy
@LauraLThornton

Laura Thornton brings nearly 30 years of experience leading democracy programs across the globe, most recently as the senior vice president of democracy at the German Marshall Fund, overseeing the Alliance for Securing Democracy. Before that, she was the director of global programs at International IDEA, a Stockholm-based democracy organization, and she held senior roles with the National Democratic Institute working throughout Asia and the former Soviet Union, including serving as global associate for Georgia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia.

She has written extensively about political party development, political finance and corruption, elections, and disinformation, and has led multiple election observation missions worldwide. At NDI, Thornton designed public opinion research efforts, including national polls, focus groups, and experimental research designs to explore disinformation, security, geopolitics, democracy and human rights, and political developments. She is the co-author of *Political Parties in Asia: Promoting Reform and Combating Corruption in Eight Countries* (NDI, 2003). Thornton has a master's degree from Princeton University and a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University.

Expertise:

- State of democracy (US and global); rising authoritarianism
- Information disorder/landscape; pre-emption efforts
- Foreign malign influence
- Election observation, reform, best practice
- Polarization and political cleavages
- Rise of far right movements, illiberalism
- Political party development
- Regional expertise: Former Soviet Union, Southeast Asia

Medium:

- Op-Ed
- Print/Online
- TV
- Radio/Podcast



PAUL FAGAN

Director, Democracy Programs
@PaulFaganDC

Paul Fagan is the director of the Democracy Programs for the McCain Institute at Arizona State University. In this role, Paul leads the Institute's efforts on U.S. democracy, as well as overseeing projects in Ukraine, Russia and Georgia. Previously, he served as the executive director of the Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI), an organization founded by Ben Affleck that seeks to bring the world's attention to the ongoing situation in that country but also highlight the abundant opportunities for economic and social development. Prior to joining ECI, Fagan worked at the International Republican Institute (IRI), an organization that promotes democracy worldwide by developing political parties, civic institutions, democratic governance and the rule of law. He was IRI's Africa director for nearly four years, overseeing IRI's programs during South Sudan's successful and historic transition to independence; led election observation missions to Nigeria and Somaliland; implemented IRI's first programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and ushered in IRI's return to Mali. He was also chief of party for IRI's programs in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Earlier while at IRI, he worked on programs in the former Soviet Union and Latin America, serving as the Latin America and Caribbean division deputy director.

Expertise:

- Democracy issues in sub-Saharan Africa
- Global democracy, trends
- Domestic democracy
- Political violence
- Civility in politics

Medium:

- TV
- Print/Online
- Radio/Podcast



CORBAN TEAGUE

Director, Human Rights & Freedom Program
@CorbanTeague

Corban Teague is the director of the Human Rights & Freedom Program at the McCain Institute at Arizona State University. In this role, he engages with policymakers and other stakeholders to advance individual rights and freedom around the world. Prior to joining the McCain Institute, Teague was the director of policy & government relations at a human rights philanthropy, where he worked to strengthen U.S. foreign policy efforts to counter human trafficking and prevent mass atrocities. He also led congressional advocacy at an anti-human trafficking nonprofit, and before that, he spent four years as a congressional staffer.

Teague is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and George Mason University School of Law (now Antonin Scalia Law School). He is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Expertise:

- Anti-human trafficking policy
- Countering authoritarian regimes
- American leadership in foreign policy
- Human rights foreign policy (conservative perspective)

Medium:

- Print/Online
- Radio
- Op-Ed
- TV, recorded



SCOTT NEMETH

Assistant Director, Leadership Programs
@ScottWNemeth

Scott Nemeth serves as the assistant director of Leadership Programs at the McCain Institute at Arizona State University.

Prior to the McCain Institute, Nemeth served as the Legislative Strengthening Specialist at the International Republican Institute (IRI). He founded and managed the legislative strengthening portfolio which included two global programs: the U.S. House Democracy Partnership and the Institute for Representative Government. Nemeth has substantial on the ground experience in 35 countries around the world including Lebanon, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Colombia, the Baltics, the Balkans and Southeast Asia.

Prior to joining IRI, Nemeth served as a Legislative Assistant to U.S. Congressman David Valadao and concurrently served as Majority Staff Director for the U.S. House of Representatives Central America Caucus where he built support throughout Congress for aid to the Northern Triangle. Nemeth began his time on Capitol Hill as a Military Legislative Correspondent for U.S. Senator Dan Coats. He previously served as a Field Director for the Republican National Committee and has campaign experience at the local, state and federal level.

Expertise:

- Youth participation in democracy
- Youth pushing back against authoritarianism
- Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia
- Democracy issues in Central America, Columbia, Venezuela

Medium:

- Print/Online
- Radio
- TV, recorded
- Op-Ed



BERIVAN ORUCOGLU

Assistant Director, Human Rights Defenders Program

Berivan Orucoglu is currently the Assistant Director of the Human Rights Defenders Program at the McCain Institute for International Leadership at ASU. In this role, she works with the Senior Director for Human Rights and Freedom to provide transition assistance to human rights activists forced to flee their surroundings because of threats.

She is a former journalist and served as the senior Communications Advisor to the American Ambassador in Ankara, Turkey. During her time at the Embassy, she regularly organized and supported high level visits to Turkey, winning the commendation of former Vice President Biden, former Secretary of State Kerry, former Secretary Clinton.

Before joining the Embassy, Ms. Orucoglu worked for various media outlets in Turkey, Europe and the U.S. covering major news stories of the last decade. As a diplomatic correspondent, she has traveled to Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Gulf States. While based in Brussels, she followed EU, NATO and international summits. She speaks fluent Turkish.

Expertise:

- Human rights issues
- International human rights activism
- Protecting and supporting human rights defenders, journalists in exile
- Violations of freedom of press, freedom of expression

Medium:

- TV
- Radio
- Print/Online
- Op-Ed



PEDRO PIZANO

Assistant Director, Democracy Programs
@PedroPizano

Pedro Pizano is the assistant director for the Democracy Programs at the McCain Institute in Washington D.C. He previously served as the Northwestern-McCain Public Interest Legal Award Fellow and the International Criminal Law Fellow and Human Rights Journalism Fellow at the McCain Institute and ASU's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law's International Rule of Law and Security (IRLS) Program, under Amb. Clint Williamson.

Prior to the McCain Institute, Pizano worked at Human Rights Watch, the Human Rights Foundation and the Oslo Freedom Forum. He also interned for a federal judge, a global law firm, and at a district attorney's office.

Pizano is a graduate of Northwestern Law and Boston University. He holds a certificate in international human rights law from Oxford University/GW.

Expertise:

- Political imprisonment, hostages, and wrongful detainees in Latin America, Russia, and beyond
- Crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes
- Global democracy and international human rights law

Medium:

- TV
- Print/Online
- Radio
- Op-Ed (English, Spanish, French)