



FULBRIGHT PROGRAM SUPPORT IN THE FACE OF DRASTIC PROPOSED BUDGETARY CUTS

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The continued viability of the Fulbright Program is at risk, but it is not too late to preserve this treasure of American diplomacy and goodwill for the world.

Description of the Fulbright Program

In September 1945, then-freshman Sen. J. William Fulbright introduced a bill calling for the use of proceeds from the sale of surplus World War II materiel to fund the promotion of international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education and culture.

Enabling legislation for what became known as the Fulbright Program passed the U.S. Senate by unanimous consent, and the bill became law in September 1946. The Fulbright Program signaled the commitment of Congress to develop post-war leadership and to engage constructively with the community of nation-states and their citizens throughout the post-war world.

Today the Fulbright Program is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. It is considered to be the most widely recognized and effective international exchange program in the world.

Since its inception, more than 370,000 Fulbright grants have been given for post-graduate study, research, and teaching in the United States and in some 162 countries abroad to students and established scholars for research and lecturing.

The United States and many countries have benefited greatly from the substantial numbers of Fulbright exchange students and scholars who have contributed culturally, professionally, and financially and who have promoted international understanding not

only in every state in the United States, but also to many countries throughout the world.

Lives have changed for the better, opinions have become informed and interpersonal, and cultural and professional relationships have developed and strengthened for the many thousands of people who have benefited from Fulbright grants both in the United States and abroad.

Who Was Sen. J. William Fulbright?

At the time he introduced the legislation that was to bear his name, Fulbright was a freshman senator from Arkansas. He had been a law student at George Washington University Law School and later studied at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom as a Rhodes Scholar. He taught law at the University of Arkansas, later becoming president of the university.

In 1945, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, ultimately becoming the storied chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. He served as chairman until December 1974, when he stepped down from this highly public role.

Chairman Fulbright famously presided over televised broadcasts of hearings before the committee, iconically recognizable for wearing green eyeshades during many, often controversial hearings by the committee on the Vietnam War. After leaving the Senate following his defeat in a primary election by then-Gov. Dale Bumpers, Fulbright joined the law firm now known as Hogan Lovells LLP.

The import of his legacy and contribution earned him a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993. The medal was presented by President Bill Clinton, who was also a Rhodes Scholarship recipient.

Chairman Fulbright passed away on Feb. 19, 1995, at the age of 89. His wife, Harriet, remains active in service to the founding principles of the Fulbright Program.

Who Are the Fulbrighters?

Recipients of Fulbright grants come from many fields in the arts and sciences, as well as in technical and STEM fields. They are postgraduate students, school teachers, and academics doing research and/or lecturing. Grantees come either from the United States or abroad. Their numbers include Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer Prize winners, leaders in government, and many others of note.

It is a program known throughout the world as the premier vehicle for promoting and maintaining international understanding among all peoples.

Threats to the Continued Viability of the Fulbright Program

Since 1946, the Fulbright Program has served the world by enhancing international understanding. Recently, the program was targeted for a 47 percent reduction in U.S.-funded support by the U.S. Department of State.

Last year the Fulbright Program received a budgetary allocation of \$240 million. The Trump administration's current budgetary proposal would reduce that allocation by 47 percent, to \$127.2 million in fiscal year 2019. Such a reduction would end the Fulbright Program as the world has known it.

It is notable that the Fulbright Program has operated not just with U.S. support, but also with some \$110 million in annual matching funds from host nations. For example, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany completely covers the expenses of Fulbright English-language teachers.

As of this writing, the budgetary process has seen ever increasing proposed reductions. On Sept. 7, 2017, the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported a "mark" of \$240 million for the Fulbright Program for fiscal year 2019. Ranking minority member Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., proposed a budgetary enhancement of \$100 million, but his proposal was defeated on a party-line vote, losing by one vote.

Soon thereafter, Rep. Keith Rothfus, R-Pa., introduced a bill in the House of Representatives that would have further reduced the House appropriation by an additional \$30 million. This bill was defeated by a vote of 248 to 163.

The large number of votes in support of this House proposal suggests that at least 162 (one House member resigned after the vote) do not support continued Fulbright funding at prior levels. This presents an opportunity for Fulbright advocates to advance arguments in favor of the Fulbright Program.

There does seem to be support, both in the House and in the Senate, for the restoration of most of the funding at previous funding levels. Nevertheless, advocates of soft diplomacy in the form of the Fulbright Program will need to exercise vigilance and proactivity in the months and years ahead.

Personal Observations

I first served as a Fulbright lecturer in law in and for the Republic of Bulgaria just as that country was transitioning from a system of state socialism to a nascent democracy. It was a highly memorable experience at a time of significant change involving democracy, the rule of law, and market reforms in the post-Soviet world. The culmination of my own Fulbright law lectureship came with my being requested by Chairman Ivan Grigorov of the Supreme Court of Cassation of Bulgaria to invite and escort the late U.S. Chief Justice William Rehnquist on his first-ever visit to this newly democratic state. I was honored to do so, and the visit led to a number of follow-up judicial visits between the two countries.

I believe that the Fulbright Program has been instrumental in supporting the development of the rule of law in Bulgaria and in other emerging democracies.

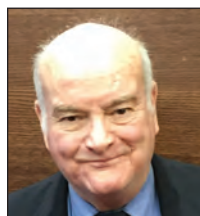
I was recently selected for a second Fulbright law lectureship, again in Bulgaria, to teach public international law and the law of international business transactions at the University of Sofia.

I certainly look forward to doing so, in the hope that others will be able to follow.

Quo Vadis?

The Trump administration's proposal essentially to eliminate the Fulbright Program would not affect me directly; rather, it would profoundly disadvantage other potential recipients from serving as Fulbright scholars in the years to come.

I fervently hope that funding will be restored to enable so many to benefit from the experiential richness afforded by the Fulbright Program, which has done so much to promote intercultural understanding, education, peace, and harmony in our world. ☺



Brian C. Murphy is the immediate past chairperson of the FBA International Law Section, and he has stepped down as president of the FBA District of Columbia Chapter in order to continue his service as senior fulbright lecturer in law at the University of Sofia, Bulgaria. © 2018. Brian C. Murphy. All Rights Reserved.

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