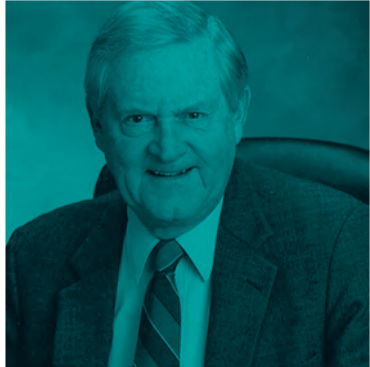


# ILLUMINATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S MILLER CENTER

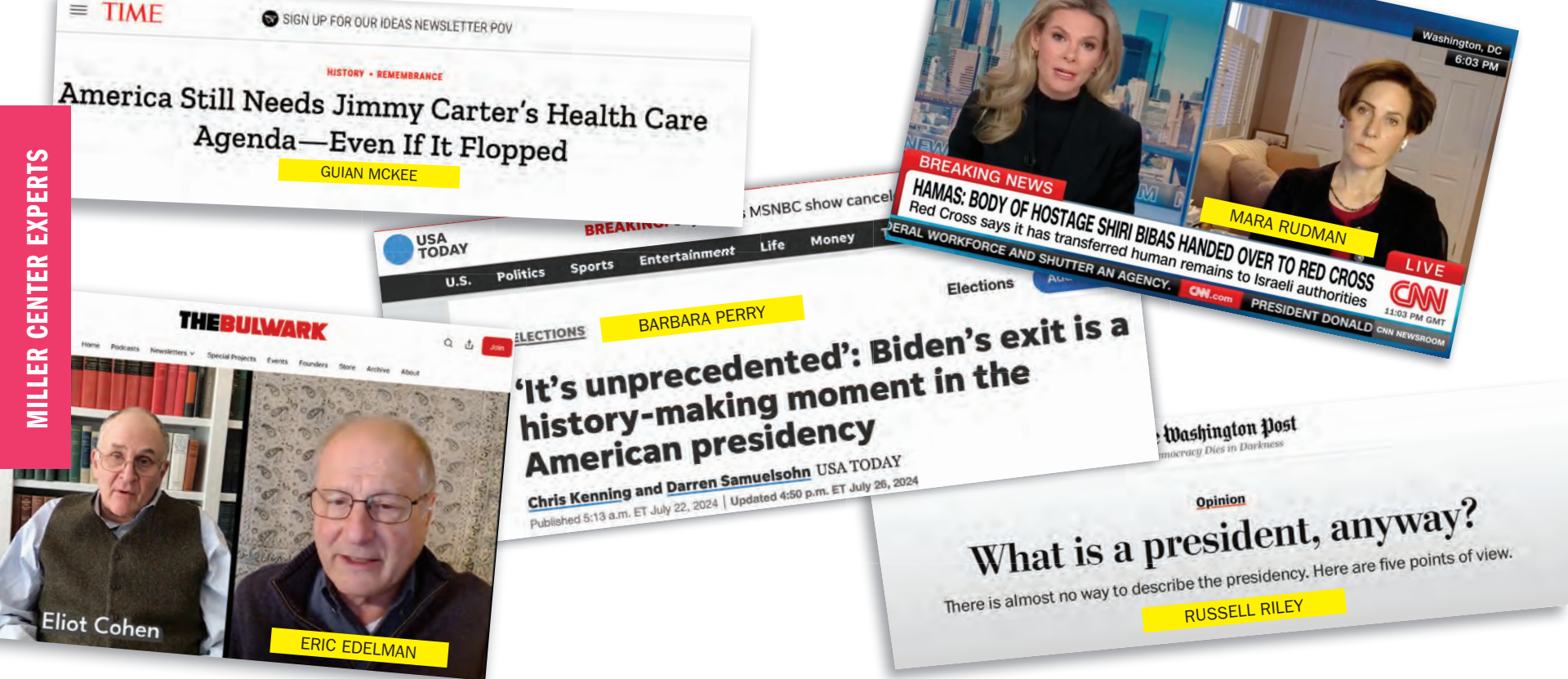
SPRING 2025



FIVE DECADES  
OF LEADERSHIP  
*p. 10*







MILLER CENTER EXPERTS

# THE FIRST WORD, AND THE LAST

MILLER CENTER EXPERTS ARE OFTEN SOUGHT OUT BY JOURNALISTS FOR THEIR INSIGHTS

By Hallie Richmond

On the day before the 2024 presidential election, *The Washington Post* ran a feature titled “What is a president, anyway?” The *Post* solicited comments from five leading thinkers on the U.S. presidency. The one quoted first and the other given the last word were Miller Center scholars.

Melody Barnes, a Miller Center professor of practice and the executive director of UVA’s Karsh Institute of Democracy, wrote, “Our best presidents have been students of the past and of their moment in history. . . . No wonder that almost every occupant of the Oval Office has left with far more gray hair than he had on Inauguration Day.”

Russell Riley, co-chair of the Miller Center’s Presidential Oral History Program, wrote that “a central part of the president’s job is to prioritize. . . . Most often this role is exercised in the negative: ‘No, we can’t do that.’ But there are also rare moments when the reverse happens: Presidents are confronted by seemingly impossible problems, and—based on their unique vision of the situation and their own willingness to risk political capital—say, ‘We can do this. We *must* do this.’”

Being cited in major news stories is not unusual for Miller Center scholars. Indeed, it is the norm. Nearly two times every day in 2024, a Miller Center expert was featured or quoted in a major national media outlet. And very often, the quotes from those experts appeared in one of the two most prominent locations in any story: first or last.

The first quote in an article is the place usually reserved for a preeminent national authority, and the last quote is the “kicker” spot, earned for deft elegance of expression or lasting insight.

For example, “It’s unprecedented” was the first observation that *USA Today* chose to highlight in a story published a few hours after President Joe Biden dropped out of the 2024 presidential race—an insight offered by Barbara A. Perry, co-chair of the oral history program.

A few weeks earlier, after Biden’s disastrous debate performance against then-candidate Donald Trump, *The Washington Post* closed out a story with this pithy quote from Riley: “Nobody rises to the Oval Office without Olympic-grade competition genes, so I’m sure that he [Biden] believed he would prove the doubters wrong. By all accounts, he did not.”

Miller Center experts are sought out by journalists for their insights and special ability to translate academic research into everyday language that is appreciated by audiences interested in U.S. history, politics, and leadership. The Center’s experts are specialists in different subjects, time periods, and policy areas. But one quality shared across the board—in addition to a commitment to a civil, nonpartisan approach rooted in historical insight—is an uncommon ability to tell stories well.

Miller Center experts are also frequently tapped for their foreign policy expertise. Eric Edelman, a practitioner senior fellow, and Mara Rudman, the Center’s James R. Schlesinger Distinguished Professor, served together on the Commission on the National Defense Strategy, and both are often interviewed about national security and domestic policy.

Edelman, a former U.S. under secretary of defense, also produces *Shield of the Republic*, a weekly podcast for *The Bulwark* that is cosponsored by the Miller Center, with topics such as “October 7: One year later” and “Is Trump 2.0 a guaranteed foreign policy disaster?” Rudman, a former State Department Middle East envoy, is in demand by journalists from outlets as varied as BBC News, Bloomberg, Fox News, Al Arabiya, and *The Jerusalem Post*. She also offers expertise on domestic policy issues that depend on global relationships, writing memorably in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, “This moment, with the right leader, can pave the way toward a secure, stable Middle East.”

**FIND MORE MEDIA APPEARANCES BY MILLER CENTER EXPERTS AT**  
[millercenter.org/latest-news](https://millercenter.org/latest-news)

# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

By BILL ANTHOLIS *Director & CEO*

As we begin our 50th year, I have had the good fortune to reexamine the establishment of the Miller Center, including our founding mission statement and our evolution as an organization.

I am struck by how well the Miller Center's founders captured a complex need in our society and how, 50 years later, we are still fulfilling that vision.

**The Miller Center's founders wanted an organization that would explore and engage:**

- They believed it to be important to explore, in a rigorous and nonpartisan way, how the presidency advances America's priorities.
- They also believed it to be essential for scholars, practitioners, and leading citizens to engage with one another to develop solutions to major problems.

Looking back across our five decades, what impresses me most is that the Miller Center has earned the trust of people from across the political spectrum for both our scholarship and our efforts to apply that research toward practical solutions. That unique undertaking could not be more relevant than it is today.

You might ask, "How does exploring and engaging help advance the common good?"

In that regard, I feel excited about and inspired by the Center's unique ability to help lead the nation through a period of presidential transitions. Transitions between administrations have long been a core topic of Miller Center expertise. So many of our unique and trusted resources focus on what makes for an effective first year in the Oval Office—even if a president is starting from scratch for the second time.

At the Miller Center, we believe that it's important to be informed about what has and has not worked well before.

Our presidential oral histories and presidential recording transcriptions demonstrate that the detailed histories of presidents from both parties are essential to understanding how government actually works. Our full-time and affiliated faculty, working closely with our network of practitioners, has listened to—and participated in—countless discussions about how to lead effectively and responsibly, through the first year and beyond.

Indeed, the Nixon-to-Ford transition was the central subject of our first oral history in 1977 with the senior Ford White House team. Transitions also featured prominently in the Carter and Reagan oral history projects and led the Center to produce several significant transition projects working in tandem with both Republican and Democratic administrations. You'll read more about our long expertise with presidential transitions later in this issue of *Illumination*.

Our five decades of work has only been possible because so many members of our local and national communities have invested in us. We are entirely a product of philanthropy—including several transformational gifts, such as Burkett Miller's founding gift to launch the Miller Center in 1975 and more recent gifts that will allow us to begin to endow our presidential oral history program. Even though we are affiliated with the University of Virginia, we do not collect tuition revenue, and we receive very limited state and federal government funding. We rely on you and your generosity, and we thank you for your ongoing financial support that makes our work possible.

Being supported by the community, and belonging to the community, also means that we are governed by the community. We've been blessed with extraordinary Governing Councils over the years, drawn from different community members who are interested and invested in our work. In this edition of *Illumination*, we highlight some of the impressive people who have graced the Governing Council's rolls over the past five decades.

Just as we have since 1975, we continue to explore and engage. We look forward to doing this good work for another 50 years and beyond, with your participation.



**Cover: Current and former Governing Council chairs as well as distinguished past members who served in government and journalism. From left to right: Stephen M. Burns, George K. Martin, Sylvia M. Burwell, Eugene V. Fife, Brent Scowcroft, Alice W. Handy, Frances F. Townsend, A. Linwood Holton Jr., James C. Lehrer, Daniel K. Frierson, Thomas E. Donilon, Ann Compton, L. F. Payne**



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# EXPANDING THE CIRCLE

SENIOR FELLOWS BRING OUTSIDE EXPERTISE TO THE CENTER

By Brielle Entzminger

Associate White House counsel. Virginia secretary of education. Jazz director and radio host. These are just a few of the credentials that distinguish the Miller Center's current class of senior fellows—individuals who bring practical expertise to enhance the Center's research and broaden its reach.

Every year, the Center welcomes a new group of senior fellows. In addition to former government practitioners and professionals, new fellows include academic faculty appointed at the University of Virginia and other institutions and scholars engaged in research projects with a Miller Center faculty member or fellow.

"We wanted to bring together experts who could talk about the importance of presidential policy across a wide range of domains, from health policy and immigration to national security and economic policy," explained David Leblang, the Center's Randolph P. Compton Professor and director of policy research. Leblang structured the fellows program in 2017.

A committee of Miller Center faculty and staff, chaired by Leblang, solicits fellow nominations from the Center's community throughout the year. The committee vets the nominations and then presents their recommendations to Miller Center Director and CEO William Antholis for approval. In addition to incorporating senior fellows in events, programs, and research, the Center promotes the work of its fellows, who serve renewable two-year contract terms.

The senior fellows program, which currently includes 10 practitioner and 35 faculty fellows, is not simply a one-way arrangement benefiting the Center. As four members of the current senior fellows class explain, their affiliation with the Center also enhances their own research and scholarship.

## GERARD ROBINSON

Before joining the Miller Center in 2024, "there weren't a lot of opportunities for me to share my work through the lens of American presidents," said Gerard Robinson, a professor of practice in public policy and law at the University of Virginia Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy with a joint appointment at UVA's School of Law. "Primarily, we focus on what Congress has done, what governors have done. What about our presidents?"

As a faculty senior fellow, Robinson said he has appreciated the opportunity to engage with and learn from other scholars, as well as "challenge, supplement, and enhance my own research about the American presidency."

Robinson's areas of expertise include criminal justice reform, race in American institutions, K-12 and higher education, and the function of nonprofit organizations in civil society. He is particularly interested in the role of education inside prisons, both in the U.S. and globally.

"The U.S. leads the world in the number of people who are incarcerated, at 1.9 million people," explained Robinson. "Even though the United States makes up four percent of the global population, we make up 16 percent of the people around the world who are incarcerated."

Between 2023 and 2024, Robinson traveled to Brazil, Germany, Kenya, and Norway to learn about programs and public policies designed to help incarcerated adults and juveniles. He visited prisons, reentry centers, and colleges that trained correctional officers. He also met with government officials and spoke with prison guards and incarcerated students.

"The goal was to go and see what other people are doing right, what they're doing wrong, and what we as Americans can bring into our country as well as share with others globally," Robinson said.

Before joining academia, Robinson served as commissioner of education for the state of Florida and as Virginia's secretary of education under Governor Robert McDonnell. He has also served as executive director of the Center for Advancing Opportunity, a Washington, D.C.-based research and education initiative, and president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options. He has been a fifth-grade teacher in Los Angeles, a legislative liaison for the superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools, and a legislative aide in the California and Virginia legislatures.

In February 2025, Robinson hosted a workshop for Center faculty and fellows discussing the role that presidents from the 1960s to present have played in "how we think about punishment" and "how that influences public policy," he said. The workshop also explored how these policies affect incarcerated people and people on probation and parole.

Robinson aims to lead future convenings on criminal justice reform at the Center, including an event assessing the impact of President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 "War on Crime."





### ASHLEY DEEKS

Before entering academia, Ashley Deeks had a distinguished career in the executive branch. She served in numerous U.S. State Department positions, including assistant legal adviser for political-military affairs in the department's Office of the Legal Adviser.

The Miller Center's reputation for public conversations between executive branch officials and academics inspired Deeks to join the Center in 2019. She is a faculty senior fellow at the Miller Center and the Class of 1948 Professor of Scholarly Research in Law at the University of Virginia School of Law.

"It's great to know that there are academic, policy, and legal experts in the Miller Center family who are interested in the same types of issues that I'm interested in, [fostering a] robust culture of thinking about the role of the executive," said Deeks, who also directs UVA's National Security Law Center.

An expert on international law, national security, terrorism, intelligence, and the laws of war, Deeks has led Center events focused on domestic and foreign policy. In September 2024, she moderated a discussion with Kenneth L. Wainstein, under secretary for intelligence and analysis for the Department of Homeland Security, examining the challenges facing the country's intelligence program and election security.

During Joe Biden's presidency, Deeks returned to the executive branch, serving as associate White House counsel and as deputy legal adviser to the National Security Council.

In her forthcoming book, *The Double Black Box: National Security, Artificial Intelligence, and the Struggle for Democratic Accountability*, Deeks identifies key challenges in overseeing government uses of artificial intelligence (AI) for military and intelligence purposes. In addition, she scrutinizes government secrecy surrounding AI.

Deeks's recent research focuses on the breadth of the president's executive authority. In an article published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, she closely examined the national security powers that the president delegates to executive agencies.

In partnership with UVA law professor Kristen Eichensehr, who is also a Miller Center faculty senior fellow, Deeks published an article in the *Virginia Law Review* examining the problems of "frictionless government."

"We started to notice there are some potential downsides when you have both the House and Senate [and] the president all pulling in the same direction—that can produce too much agreement," explained Deeks. She noted examples in U.S. history, including the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

"There may be situations that should at least give us pause," continued Deeks, "and prompt us to try to re-introduce some elements of friction into policymaking."



### KEVIN K. GAINES

Since joining the Miller Center in 2019, Kevin K. Gaines, the Julian Bond Professor of Civil Rights and Social Justice at the University of Virginia, has facilitated public conversations about the intersection between African American history, the civil rights movement, and current public policy issues.

"This is why I'm part of the Miller Center," said Gaines, who is a faculty senior fellow and previously served as the W. E. B. Du Bois Professor of Africana Studies and History at Cornell University. "I want to focus on having conversations that go beyond the way these issues are discussed in the mainstream media and in a lot of public fora."

At the Center, Gaines has shared his expertise on issues concerning race and racism, including police brutality, Black Lives Matter protests, and the criminal justice system. Most recently, he moderated a post-2024 election analysis event in January 2025 discussing how the politics of race and gender affected the election and current challenges facing voting rights.

In the classroom, Gaines incorporates the Center's presidential resources into his lectures. While teaching a UVA course in fall 2024 on the civil rights movement, he played for his students a 1963 phone conversation, drawn from the Presidential Recordings Program's archive, between President Lyndon Johnson and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Three days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, "to King's astonishment, Johnson tells King that he is going to put all of his support behind passing the federal civil rights legislation that Kennedy had introduced, [as] a tribute to Kennedy," Gaines explained.

"It's amazing for students to hear the astonishment in King's voice when he hears something that he wasn't expecting," Gaines continued. "The ability to use those [recordings] in the classroom brings history alive for students."

During future Center events, Gaines plans to discuss the history of the African American electorate, as well as African American contributions to American democracy, including art, music, and literature. A former jazz director, radio host, and member of the Detroit Jazz Festival advisory board, Gaines especially enjoys teaching about the history of jazz.

"Jazz is a field that is about more than music," Gaines said, "and has touched on American society and politics in many ways."

(Continued next page)

TO GIVE A GIFT TO THE MILLER CENTER, VISIT  
[millercenter.org/donate](https://millercenter.org/donate)





## JENNIFER LAWLESS

The Miller Center's diverse intellectual community has exposed Jennifer Lawless "to political scientists and practitioners whose work is instrumental in shaping my own."

"Forging those connections [is] key to being a successful scholar," said Lawless, UVA's Leone Reaves and George W. Spicer Professor of Politics and chair of the

UVA Department of Politics. For the politics

department, the Center is particularly "vital for ensuring that our faculty members are able to be productive [and] engaged in wider policy debates—[that] makes them stronger political scientists."

Since joining the Center as a senior fellow in 2019, Lawless has moderated and participated in numerous events, sharing her expertise on political ambition, campaigns, and elections. She's in high demand from journalists as an expert who offers trenchant analysis of fast-moving political developments and is regularly quoted by the nation's most influential print and broadcast outlets.

The author or coauthor of nine books, Lawless' most recent, *News Hole: The Demise of Local Journalism and Political Engagement*, won the Harvard Shorenstein Center 2023 Goldsmith Prize for Best Academic Book.

In her forthcoming book, the third edition of *It Takes More Than a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*, Lawless and coauthor Richard L. Fox sound an alarm about the systemic gender gap in political ambition and the challenges women face navigating the candidate emergence process. The book expands on the first and second editions, published in 2005 and 2010, respectively.

Drawing from national surveys of more than 10,000 potential female candidates in 2001, 2011, and 2021, the book shows that "women were about a third less likely than men to have considered running for office—even though on paper they looked exactly the same [and] had the same professional and political interests" as male candidates, explained Lawless.

"Although there's been major societal change over the last 20 years when it comes to women's representation and presence in politics, [the] gender gap in political ambition is the same size now as it was two decades ago," stressed Lawless. "If we care about democratic legitimacy and a government that feels open to 50 percent of the population, we have a long way to go."

MEET ALL OF THE CENTER'S SENIOR FELLOWS AT [millercenter.org/seniorfellows](https://millercenter.org/seniorfellows)

CLARENCE PAGE WITH JENNIFER LAWLESS



KEVIN K. GAINES



GERARD ROBINSON



ASHLEY DEIKS WITH ERIC EDELMAN





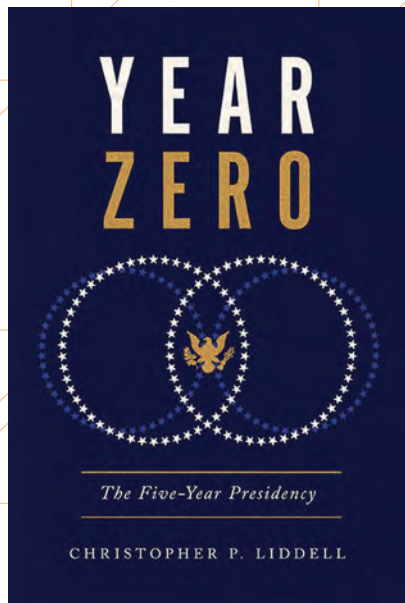
# A PRESIDENT RETURNS

MILLER CENTER SCHOLARS HELPED PREPARE FOR TRUMP'S SECOND FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

By Hallie Richmond

Well before Donald Trump's reelection, the Miller Center was working hard to help prepare for his potential journey back to the White House while providing ongoing assessments of those efforts.

That work began with a wealth of existing Miller Center resources on past presidential transitions. The most recent of those were two books on transitions: *Year Zero: The Five-Year Presidency*, by Christopher Liddell, and *The Peaceful Transfer of Power: An Oral History of America's Presidential Transitions*, by David Marchick and Alexander Tippett with A. J. Wilson. Both books were published as part of the Miller Center Studies on the Presidency series with the University of Virginia Press.



Chris Liddell's book was particularly important. He had previously helped plan a potential transition for GOP Candidate Mitt Romney in 2012 and then served in the first Trump administration as deputy chief of staff. In that capacity, he helped complete the transition to President Joe Biden after the January 6th Capitol attack. Liddell's book argues that a presidential candidate should begin planning the transition one year before Inauguration Day.

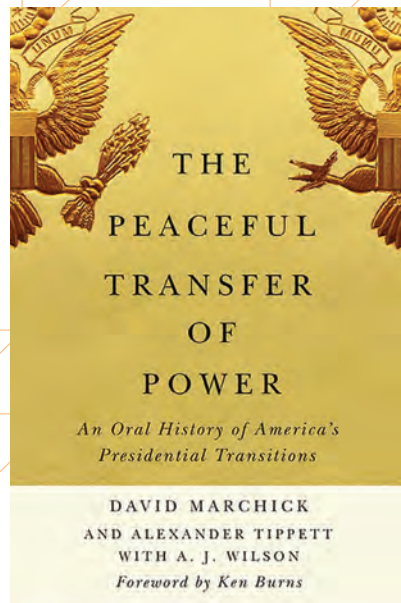
The Miller Center took Liddell's lessons to heart. In addition to publishing his book, the Center began sharing its extensive transition materials with the 2024 candidates' campaigns and transition teams. All of these materials are available on the Miller Center website. The Center also posted a new, easy-to-use landing page that serves both general and specialist audiences with links to past events, recent media citations, and in-depth scholarship.

"Our work on presidential transitions has long been central to our work on the presidency," said Marc Selverstone, the Center's director of presidential studies. "So much of what makes or breaks a presidency, from the personnel selected to the processes adopted to the priorities established to the politics of the moment—these all take form during the transition period and go a long way toward shaping a president's success."

Highlights of the Miller Center's half century of transition expertise include the Center's first-ever oral history, in which senior staffers from the Gerald Ford administration discussed the exceptional nature of the 1974 transition between Presidents Nixon and Ford.

In the mid-1980s, the Miller Center coordinated the National Commission on Presidential Transitions and Foreign Policy with representatives from each presidential transition since World War II. This nonpartisan commission codified successful transition practices to ensure national security and improve foreign policy continuity during the potentially perilous period when one White House administration gives way to another.

After the contested 2000 election, the Miller Center assembled another national commission, co-chaired by former Presidents Ford and Jimmy



Carter. The National Commission on Federal Election Reform proposed election reforms that were later adopted in the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

More recently, in the lead-up to President Trump's first term and the 2016–17 transition, Miller Center scholars produced dozens of user-friendly essays for the First Year Project, which remains an evergreen guide to leading an effective first (and fifth) year in office. In 2023, participants in the Center's Conference on the American Presidency examined potential areas for future presidential reforms—including the broken confirmation process, which can hamstring a new president in the first 100 days and beyond.

In 2024, the Miller Center did behind-the-scenes work in weekly "Election 2024" discussions. The Center partnered with the UVA Karsh Institute of Democracy to provide a virtual meeting place for UVA scholars across the political spectrum to air new ideas and gather feedback. New insights on elections and the presidential transitions that follow were developed in these group meetings and have been making their way into public view in the form of new research.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE CENTER'S CONFERENCE ON THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY IN OCTOBER 2023

Several of the Center's recent public events featured analysis of how Trump prepared to staff his second administration. Just after the election in November 2024, the Center partnered with the Katzmann Initiative at the Brookings Institution for a special event on how incoming administrations must balance the powers of the presidency while negotiating with the legislative branch. These key themes emerged from the Conference on the American Presidency. Future scholarship and events will assess cabinet performance.

REVIEW THE MILLER CENTER'S PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION RESOURCES AT [millercenter.org/transition](https://millercenter.org/transition)



# JOIN US!

FIFTY



YEARS

1975-2025

The Miller Center was built by philanthropy—first by Burkett Miller with his extraordinary founding gift, then by decades of like-minded people seeking in-depth, civil discussions.

**This year we celebrate the Center's 50th anniversary.**

We hope you'll participate in the festivities and special events highlighting five decades of Miller Center research and engagement. We can't wait to celebrate with YOU!

If you'd like to make a 50th anniversary gift to the Miller Center, please visit [millercenter.org/donate](https://millercenter.org/donate). Or reach out to Kelly McCaskill at 434-297-8244 or [kwmccaskill@virginia.edu](mailto:kwmccaskill@virginia.edu) to learn more about anniversary giving opportunities.



## WHY I GIVE

ANNE AND THAD JONES, MEMBERS OF THE MILLER CENTER'S OVAL SOCIETY, ARE LONGTIME CHARLOTTESVILLE RESIDENTS

### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BE PART OF THE MILLER CENTER'S WORK?

We appreciate participating in civil discourse about our political institutions and different political ideologies. It's refreshing, especially now, to hear well-informed conversations that are nonconfrontational. Both of us have always been interested in history, and we want to keep educating ourselves on how history may affect the future. A few years back, the Presidential Ideas Festival was mind-blowing. In three days, the sheer amount of intellectual and political horsepower that came together was exceptional, as was the format—Democratic leaders, Republican leaders, everyone engaging in civil conversations oriented toward discussing and doing versus judging. Policy versus elections.

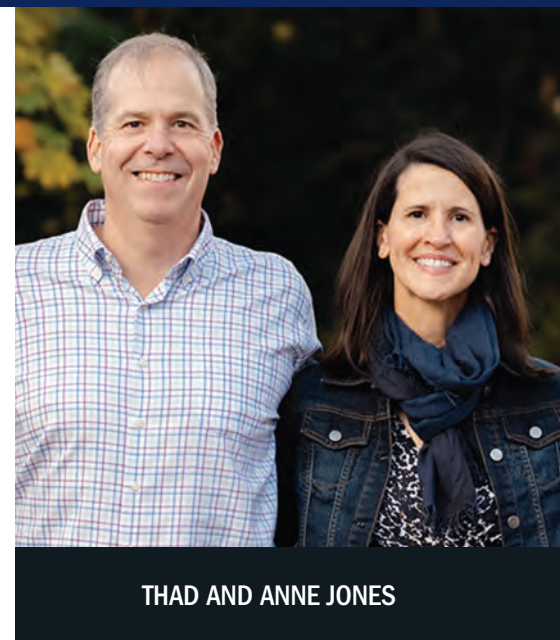
### WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CENTER'S NONPARTISAN MISSION?

It's unusual right now to find a balance of analytical perspectives without an obvious political bias overall. That's not to say that bias isn't present—we're human. But we think the Miller Center does a good job taking a balanced approach. All of us could talk in a vacuum about what would be ideal. But dealing with the real world—having policymakers come together and talk about the issues from their own partisan perspectives—is how things are actually going to get done. We so appreciate the public events where experts are brought together to have these ongoing conversations. It's unfiltered,

academic, intellectually stimulating, and amazing.

### HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR SUPPORT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

We're lucky to have the Miller Center right here in our backyard. In Charlottesville, we have a constant influx of people moving to town, and we always mention the Miller Center to newcomers. It's a unique place for intellectual exploration and a gem in our community. Of course, we're glad anyone anywhere can also attend virtually!



THAD AND ANNE JONES

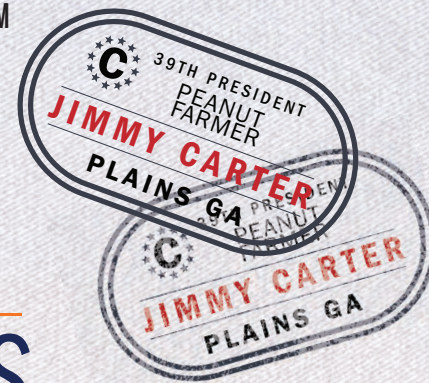
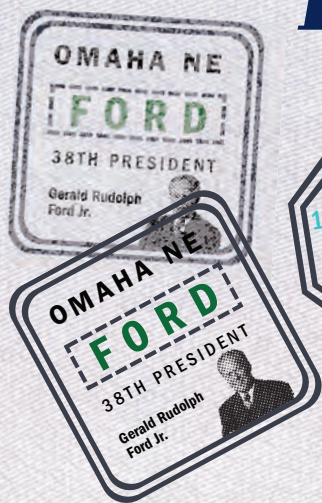
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# REVISITING THE PRESIDENCY

EVENTS CELEBRATE THE CENTER'S PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

By Brielle Entzminger



FIFTY



YEARS

50TH ANNIVERSARY

In the wake of political assassinations, anti-war protests, and racial upheaval across the country, Burkett Miller, a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law, donated the funds to create the Miller Center of Public Affairs, which opened its doors in 1975. Fearing the partisan rancor dividing the nation, Miller envisioned a place where leaders, scholars, and the public could come together for discussions—grounded in history—to find consensus solutions.

In celebration of the Miller Center's 50th anniversary, the Center has been hosting a series of special public events spotlighting its historic contributions to presidential scholarship. These events will continue through fall 2026, featuring every presidency for which Miller Center scholars have conducted an oral history. In September 2024, the Center's core presidential scholars kicked off the Revisiting the Presidency series. They reflected on Gerald Ford's presidency and the Ford Oral History Project—the Center's first major initiative.

Panelists underscored Ford's unconventional path to the White House—he was never elected president or vice president. Following Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation in 1973, President Richard Nixon appointed Ford, then House minority leader, to replace Agnew.

"Ford had never been elected to any office except the Grand Rapids, Michigan, member of Congress," said Barbara A. Perry, the Center's J. Wilson Newman Professor of Governance and co-chair of the Center's Presidential Oral History Program. "But [Ford] was viewed as bipartisan and very fair-minded," making him a strong VP pick.

The event featured compelling audio excerpts from a recorded phone call between President Lyndon Johnson and Ford about the Vietnam War, deeply resonating with the audience. During the conversation, Johnson admitted that he did not "know all the answers," as he knew Ford would not if he one day found himself in the Oval Office "in the morning by fate like I did."

"Johnson's seeing the future," said Guian McKee, the Center's White Burkett Miller Professor of Public Affairs. "It was really interesting to be able to go back to before Ford was even vice president and see the role he was playing."

1975–2025

Perry also highlighted Betty Ford's breast cancer advocacy, which was considered a taboo subject at the time. One month into Ford's presidency, the first lady was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"She knew this was an opportunity to let people know what she was going through," said Perry. "They even had a photo taken at the hospital of her. [That] was a way to get the word out to women: Get mammograms."

Other events in the 50th anniversary series highlighted Jimmy Carter's presidency, moderated by Miller Center Senior Fellow Robert Strong, who helped facilitate the Carter oral history project nearly 50 years ago. As a graduate student, Strong served as an assistant to James Sterling Young, director of the presidency program. Strong operated the tape recorder and took notes during scholars' interviews with Carter administration officials—and Carter himself.

The officials "had a story they wanted to tell," said Strong. "They thought their president was better than the American people did [and] were anxious to speak."

Today, Carter "receives more credit [than] he got in the eighties," Strong added. "Carter's reputation has gotten better as the world has gotten worse."

Scholars also revisited Ronald Reagan's presidency in an event moderated by Perry.

In addition, the Center is highlighting the achievements of its Presidential Recordings Program and policy programs, tying their work to contemporary issues. The Center will host a planned Conference on the American Presidency and an anniversary celebration in fall 2025.

"Our study of the past helps to illuminate the concerns of the present," said Marc Selverstone, the Center's director of presidential studies. "And our celebration will be an opportunity to look backward as well as forward."

WATCH RECENT PRESIDENCY EVENTS AT [millercenter.org/pastevents](https://millercenter.org/pastevents)



# INDELIBLE IMPRINTS

FIVE DECADES OF DEDICATED GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBERS HAVE SHAPED THE MILLER CENTER

By Hallie Richmond

Since 1975, many remarkable individuals have sustained the Miller Center as members of the Governing Council. They continue to bring different life experiences and fields of expertise to bear on their oversight of the Center's work.

Nationally known cabinet secretaries and senior White House officials, serving under presidents from both political parties, have joined the Center's scholars to think through major governing challenges. Leading journalists have helped our experts and professional staff frame and understand both the issues of the day and how the media reports on them. Locally beloved trailblazers and dignitaries influenced the values and early strategic direction of the Miller Center and maintain a synergistic relationship with the rest of the University.

At times when Miller Center scholarship has sparked community debate, the Governing Council has vigilantly upheld the Center's independence and academic integrity.

The Miller Center's Governing Council is a unique body at the University of Virginia. Where other academic units of the University report to the Provost, the Miller Center reports to the University's president and to the Governing Council.

"Burkett Miller and former Virginia Governor Linwood Holton clearly wanted to establish academic and political independence for the Center," said William J. Antholis, Miller Center director and CEO. "They hoped to reinforce two things: that the scholarship be intended for public audiences, and that efforts to address national challenges bring together voices from across the political spectrum."

## NOTABLE VIPS WHO HAVE SERVED AS GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBERS OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS



**Governor A. Linwood Holton Jr.** (Governing Council 1975–2015) was governor of Virginia from 1970 to 1974, the first Republican elected to that office since Reconstruction. He ended the state's "massive resistance" school segregation strategies and was a transformational Governing Council leader. Holton personally orchestrated negotiations between Burkett Miller and the University of Virginia that resulted in the Center's creation. After leaving office, he served on the Governing Council for 35 years, presiding as chair from 1977 to 1999. In 2014, the Holton Society was founded in his honor to recognize long-standing friends and supporters of the Center.



**Henry H. Fowler** (1979–1991) served in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations and ultimately became President Lyndon Johnson's secretary of the treasury. After his government service ended, Fowler became a partner at what was then known as Goldman, Sachs & Company, offering both his public- and private-sector insights to the Council.



**Herbert Brownell Jr.** (1987–1993) had been U.S. attorney general and President Dwight Eisenhower's close confidant on matters ranging from Joseph McCarthy's "Red-baiting" tactics to Ho Chi Minh's war in Indochina against France. Brownell advised Eisenhower that the president had the constitutional authority and responsibility to send federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. He also drafted the legislative proposal that became the Civil Rights Act of 1957.



**Warren E. Burger** (1990–1992) was appointed by President Richard Nixon as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He wrote the unanimous 1974 opinion that rejected Nixon's invocation of executive privilege after the Watergate scandal.



**Howard H. Baker Jr.** (1991–2001) was President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff. He was known in Washington, D.C., as the "great conciliator" from his years negotiating successful compromises, first as Senate minority leader and then majority leader.



**General Brent Scowcroft** (1995–2003) was national security advisor under President Gerald Ford and again under President George H. W. Bush. He also held senior roles in the Nixon, Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations. He was a participant in the Miller Center's first oral history on the Ford administration, addressing the Nixon–Ford transition, and was later interviewed for the George H. W. Bush Oral History Project.



## OTHER SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS



**Thomas E. Donilon** (1999–2008), the current chairman of the BlackRock Investment Institute, served as President Barack Obama’s national security advisor. During the Clinton administration, he was Secretary of State Warren Christopher’s chief of staff and assistant secretary of state. In the Carter administration, he worked in the White House Congressional Relations Office.



**Sylvia M. Burwell** (2000–2009) served under President Obama as the director of the Office of Management and Budget and then as secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She had helped establish the National Economic Council in 1993 during the Clinton administration. In between her government service, Burwell was the COO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and president of the Walmart Foundation. She served until 2024 as president of American University.



**Frances F. Townsend** (2016–2023), a corporate executive and attorney, was President George W. Bush’s homeland security advisor from 2004 to 2008. She worked at the U.S. Department of Justice under Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. She later joined CNN and then CBS as a security analyst and held senior roles at MacAndrews & Forbes and Activision Blizzard.



**L. F. Payne** (2016–2023) is president of Three Ridges Group. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1988 until 1997, representing Virginia’s fifth congressional district. Payne was a founder of the Blue Dog Coalition, a caucus of moderate and conservative Democratic members of Congress. He is a member of the Center’s Holton Society.



**Preston M. “Pete” Geren III** (2021–2024) is president and CEO of the Sid W. Richardson Foundation. He served as a U.S. congressman for the 12th district of Texas from 1989 to 1997. Geren is credited with coining the term “Blue Dog Democrat” as a founding member of the Blue Dog Coalition. He also served as secretary of the U.S. Army under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

## LEADING HISTORIANS AND JOURNALISTS



**Bob Woodward** (2001–2007), long-time Washington Post reporter, has shared in two Pulitzer Prizes. The first, in 1973, was for his coverage of the Watergate scandal with Carl Bernstein. The second, in 2003, was as the lead reporter on the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He has authored or coauthored 21 nonfiction books, most recently *War* (2024) and *The Trump Tapes* (2022).



**Michael R. Beschloss** (2002–2008), a presidential historian, is the author of 10 books, including two volumes written after the release of Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidential recordings by the LBJ Library in the 1990s: *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963–1964* and *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson’s Secret White House Tapes, 1964–1965*.



**James C. “Jim” Lehrer** (2016–2019) was known to millions of Americans as the cofounder of *PBS NewsHour* and moderator of more U.S. presidential debates than any other journalist. He once hosted a training seminar for Miller Center scholars on how to be interviewed and how to moderate a conversation. The Center’s annual James C. Lehrer Lecture honors his legacy.



**Ann Compton** (2015–2021), former *ABC News* White House correspondent, was the first woman assigned to cover the White House on a full-time basis by a network television news organization. Compton covered seven presidential administrations and served on the panels of two presidential debates. She is a member of the Center’s Holton Society.

## PREVIOUS GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRS



**Daniel K. Frierson** (1985–2014) is chairman of the board and CEO of the Dixie Group in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Center hired former Virginia Governor Gerald L. Baliles to serve as the Center’s fourth director during Frierson’s time as Governing Council chair.



**Eugene V. Fife** (2001–2020) is a retired general partner of Goldman Sachs, where he was chairman of Goldman Sachs International. During Fife’s leadership as Governing Council chair, the Center hired its current director and CEO, William J. Antholis.



**Alice W. Handy** (2014–2022) helped develop the University of Virginia’s endowment portfolio and later founded the endowment management firm, Investure. As Governing Council chair from 2018 to 2020, she strengthened the Center’s partnership with the University and supported development of the Miller Center Values Statement. She and her husband, Peter Stoudt, helped endow the James C. Lehrer Lecture.



**Stephen M. Burns** (2016–present) is a managing partner at Quad-C Management in Charlottesville, Virginia. As Governing Council chair from 2020 to 2024, Burns helped guide the Center through the COVID-19 pandemic. He and his wife, Mary Anne, established the Mary Anne and Steve Burns Presidential Studies Endowment, which helps to secure the Miller Center’s core presidential studies scholarship for the future.



**George K. Martin** (2019–present) is the former managing partner of McGuire Woods in Richmond, Virginia, and the current Miller Center Governing Council chair. In 2013, Martin became the first African American rector of the University of Virginia, a position also held by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. During Martin’s tenure as Governing Council chair, the Center will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

READ MORE ABOUT THE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT [millercenter.org/governingcouncil](https://millercenter.org/governingcouncil)





# BEYOND ‘JUST READING THE WORDS’

RETIRED SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MAKES CASE FOR PRAGMATISM OVER TEXTUALISM

By Brielle Entzminger

Retired U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen Breyer made the case for a pragmatic approach to interpreting the Constitution at the 24th annual Henry J. Abraham Distinguished Lecture in October 2024. The annual event honors the late Henry J. Abraham, a renowned constitutional law scholar and UVA professor.

Drawing from his recent book, *Reading the Constitution: Why I Chose Pragmatism, Not Textualism*, Breyer spoke to a full auditorium at the University of Virginia School of Law. He cited the influential words of Chief Justice John Marshall to argue against the textualist philosophy currently dominating the Supreme Court.

Breyer was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Bill Clinton in 1995 and served 28 years before retiring in 2022.

Textualists, Breyer explained, argue that judges should interpret legal text by focusing on the plain meaning of the language, trying to examine the words as they were understood by people at the time they were written. They assert that textualism prioritizes simplicity, produces uniformity across the country, and prevents judges from “putting in the law the things that they like,” Breyer said.

However, legal interpretation is not as simple as “just reading the words,” Breyer contended. The retired justice emphasized the importance of a pragmatic philosophy that considers the history, context, and underlying values of a legal text, as well as the potential consequences of a ruling.

He offered the example of a case in which the mother of a disabled child sued the school board for not providing adequate special education services. Federal law states “the family recovers—if they win—their costs,” said Breyer. “But what is ‘costs?’ The woman had spent \$29,000 on an educational expert. Was that part of the cost [that could be recovered], or was it just the cost of the lawyer?”

“The cases in the Supreme Court—not every one, but certainly almost every one—[are] that kind of a case,” he continued.

Breyer ultimately sounded a dire warning about what he said were the dangers of a textualist Supreme Court. He criticized the monumental *Dobbs* decision in 2022 that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and removed the constitutional right to an abortion.

“How many others are you going to overrule? Are you going to overrule every case that wasn’t done and written in a textualist style and a textualist analysis?” Breyer asked. “Hardly any cases are written in that style, certainly not before the 21st century.”

In response to such criticism, textualists argue that they seek to overturn rulings they view as “egregiously wrong,” Breyer continued. But “how do we know if it’s egregiously wrong?” he asked. This philosophy enables judges to substitute their “own view of what’s good for the country” for the law, defeating the goals of textualism, he asserted.

Furthermore, Breyer argued that judges’ life experiences naturally influence their judicial philosophies. “It’s not such a terrible thing that you have people with different backgrounds with different points of view,” he added.

Closing out the lecture, Breyer shared the advice he offered to seventh graders who asked how they could make a difference—the same lesson he said he learned from the late Senator Edward Kennedy.

“You find someone who does disagree with you [and] talk to them,” Breyer said. “And if you listen long enough, they will say something that you honestly agree with. [And] you say, ‘That’s a very good point you made. Let’s see if we can work with that.’”

The curiosity and interest of such students keeps the retired justice optimistic about the future of the country.

“They’re not looking out the window—they’re looking at what I’m saying,” said Breyer. “It’s the look in their eye in that seventh grade, where I can see they think, [We] can do something, and we can try.”

WATCH THE 2024 ABRAHAM LECTURE AT [millercenter.org/breyer](https://millercenter.org/breyer)

**“WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT IT IS A CONSTITUTION WE ARE EXPOUNDING.”**  
—CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN MARSHALL



# 'AN INCREDIBLE SENSE OF DIRECTION'

DIRECTOR'S INTERN ASPIRES TO BECOME A LAWYER—AND STUDY GOVERNMENT

By Brielle Entzminger

Laura Howard recognized the career path she wanted to pursue after discussing executive branch vacancies with Anne Joseph O'Connell, a renowned administrative law scholar, for a Miller Center project.

"That was the moment where I thought, 'That's exactly what I want to do,'" said Howard, the 2024 Director's Intern at the Center. "I was astounded by the possibility that you could be a lawyer but also be really interested in the government and do research." Howard will graduate from the University of Virginia in May with a BA in political and social thought and foreign affairs.



In addition, Howard assisted with planning the fall 2024 Government Leaders Forum, which convened federal government leaders at the Center to discuss challenges facing their agencies. She moderated a session with a former White House chief of staff and a former national security advisor which was attended by current and former Miller Center student employees. And throughout her internship, she sat in on meetings featuring leading presidential scholars.

Working directly with Miller Center Director and CEO William J. Antholis, she researched court cases and interviewed scholars for a project on executive vacancies. For the Center's Election 2024 blog, Howard coauthored an essay with Antholis detailing the steps between Election Day and final certification. Following the election, she helped prepare transition materials for the incoming Trump administration.

It was "really special" to work at the Miller Center during an election year and become an "expert on those mechanical aspects of the election," said Howard, a native of Far Hills, New Jersey.

After graduating, Howard is interested in becoming a research assistant for a think tank before applying to law school. In addition to a JD, she aims to earn a master's degree in foreign affairs or government, combining her interest in law and political research.

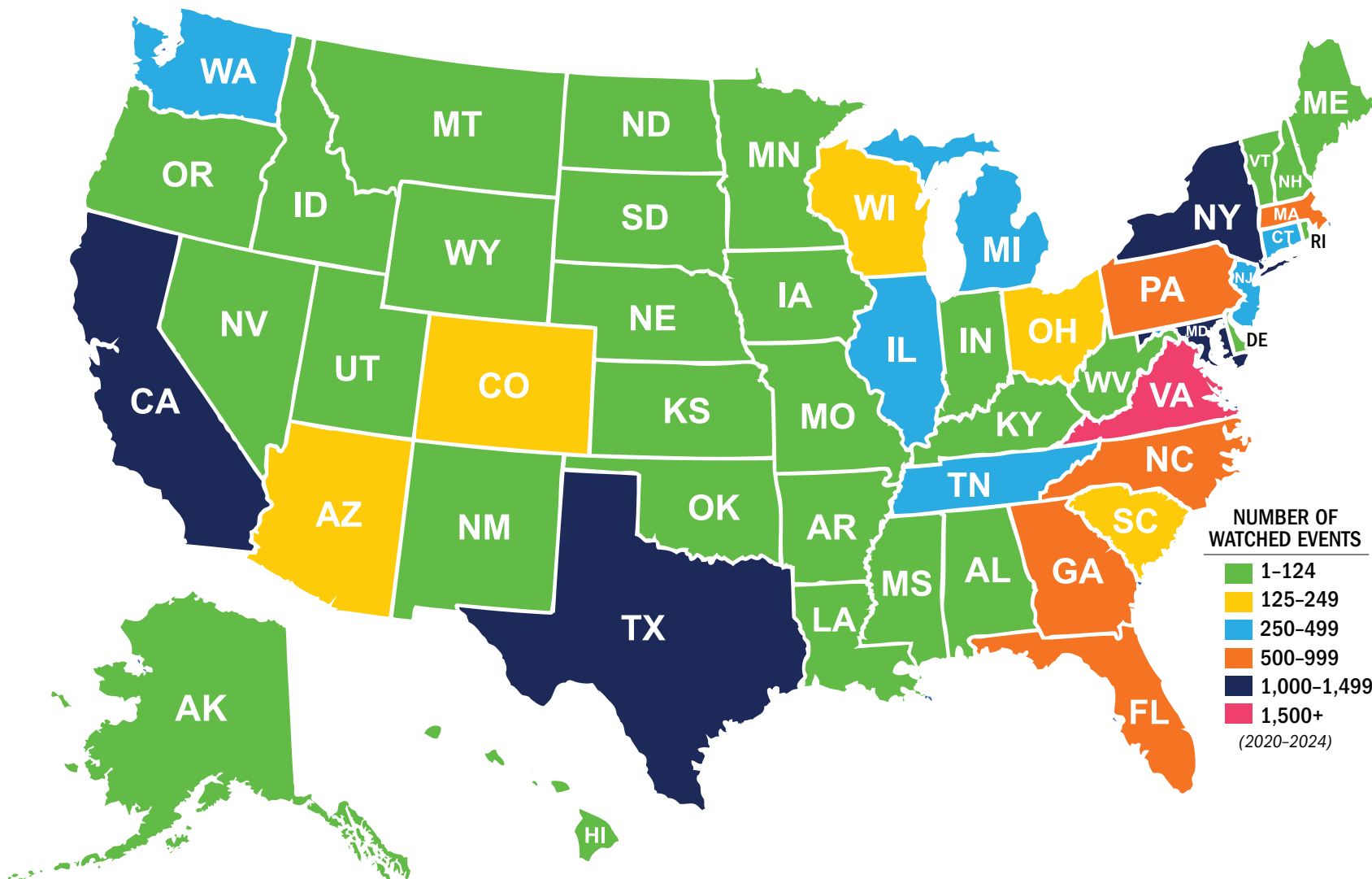
"The Miller Center," said Howard, "has given me such an incredible sense of direction and purpose with what I want to do in the future."

TO GIVE A GIFT TO THE MILLER CENTER, VISIT [millercenter.org/donate](https://millercenter.org/donate)



## BY THE NUMBERS

EXPANDING THE CENTER'S REACH TO NEW AUDIENCES



STUDENT OUTREACH





PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN WITH MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET  
IN MAY 1981

# WORD OF MOUTH

## MILLER CENTER ORAL HISTORIES SHOW UP IN SURPRISING PLACES

By Hallie Richmond

Did you know that scholars in the United Kingdom, inspired by the Miller Center’s presidential oral histories, now interview members of Parliament after they serve in office? That in his spare time, at least one Hollywood writer reads the Center’s oral histories for fun? These are just two of the unexpected ways that people all over the world use and endorse the Miller Center’s Presidential Oral History Program.

The Center’s oral histories have always been conceived of as a public service endeavor—to preserve the true voices of past U.S. presidencies for posterity. Members of former presidential administrations spend a day or more with scholars, reviewing and reflecting on their experiences in office. The transcripts of these oral history interviews provide important documentation and insight—and sometimes correctives—for every U.S. presidency since the administration of Gerald Ford.

In addition to serving as a rich source of trusted information for historians, political scientists, and other scholars, Miller Center oral histories are frequently incorporated into public commemorations of prominent government leaders. Journalists writing obituaries often quote from the Center’s interviews and rely on the detailed, professionally researched briefing books prepared before each interview by the Center’s research staff.

A recent case in point: Richard V. Allen, Ronald Reagan’s first national security advisor, was interviewed by the Miller Center in 2002 and passed away in November 2024. His obituary in *The Washington Post* drew on the Miller Center’s oral history interview to describe Allen’s role in the

last-minute selection of George H. W. Bush, instead of former President Ford, as Reagan’s running mate in 1980.

The oral history program itself has also served as a direct model for at least two other oral history programs. RAND, a nonpartisan public policy organization with a robust research program on emergency preparedness, credited the Miller Center when they decided to take oral histories of COVID-19 emergency managers to preserve insights and lessons learned for future global pandemics. Russell Riley, co-chair of the Presidential Oral History Program with Barbara A. Perry, has consulted several times with scholars affiliated with the History of Parliament Trust on their project to interview former members of the United Kingdom Parliament from the 1950s to the 2000s. Based on the success of their oral histories, the Trust is now considering a potential oral history program devoted to living prime ministers.

On a lighter note, the Center has learned that Steve Hely, an Emmy Award-winning writer and producer for shows including *Veep*, *30 Rock*, and *The Office*, is a fan of presidential history. In a post on his personal blog, *Helytimes*, he remarked, “The University of Virginia’s Miller Center collects oral histories on recent presidents. Sometimes I go poking around in them and rarely do I come away unrewarded.” Hely offered his readers some choice tidbits from the William J. Clinton Presidential History Project, including a memory from Charlene Barshefsky, U.S. trade representative, about Clinton’s ability to multitask. Hely commented that the interviews were “compelling reading, cheers to the Miller Center.”



## EXCERPT FROM THE CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

*In her Miller Center oral history from 2005, Charlene Barshefsky, a member of Clinton's cabinet (U.S. trade representative from 1997 to 2001 and deputy U.S. trade representative from 1993 to 1996), describes an interaction with the president during U.S.–Japan trade talks in Tokyo in 1993.*

The first time I met Bill Clinton was in the Oval Office to brief him on the Framework [Agreement] talks. The second time was in Tokyo in July of 1993....

Mickey [Kantor], Warren Christopher, and I went up to the President's suite at the hotel where we were all staying—the Okura. He was at the dining room table of his suite and he was dressed in khakis and a plaid shirt, looking reasonably ruffled. He was reading a newspaper when we walked in. He barely looked up. To the left was a book, open, facedown—Marcus Aurelius *Meditations*. To the right, the *New York Times* crossword puzzle with a pen....

We walked in. He lowered the newspaper—he was wearing his reading glasses—looked up, and said to me, “I’ve been waiting to see you,” which took me somewhat aback. I said, “Well, here I am.” We sat around the table, and he looked at Warren Christopher and said, “Chris?” and Chris said, “The negotiations over the Framework are at a very delicate phase and I thought Charlene should brief you and tell you what she needs.”

The President nodded and looked at me. The newspaper came up again covering his face. I remained silent and Chris motioned, [whispering] “Go ahead.” I thought, *Well, all right*. “Mr. President, this is a complicated topic. We’re at a delicate point. There are a couple of trades I could make. I don’t want to have to make any of them, and so I want to lay out a plan of action.”

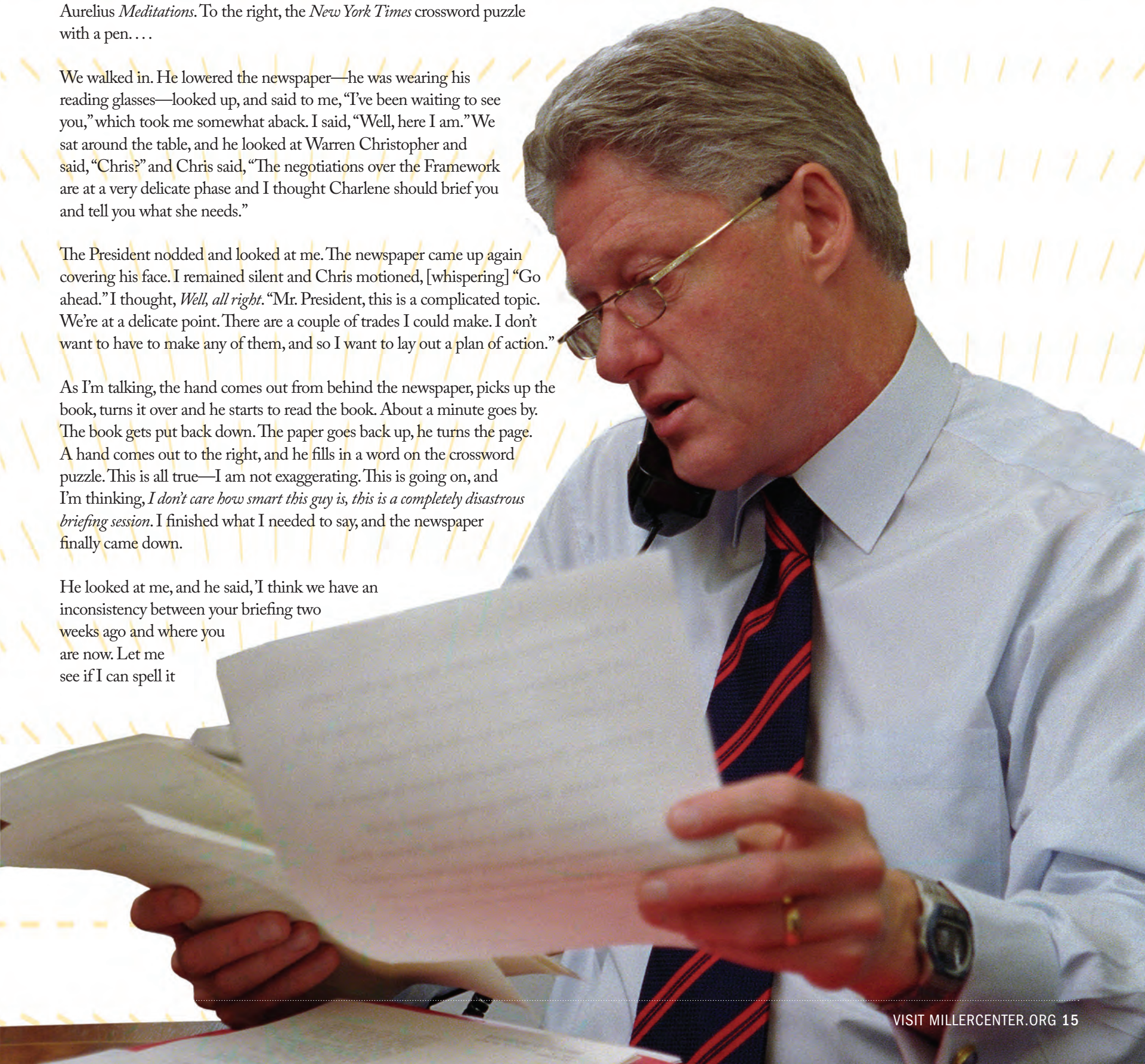
As I’m talking, the hand comes out from behind the newspaper, picks up the book, turns it over and he starts to read the book. About a minute goes by. The book gets put back down. The paper goes back up, he turns the page. A hand comes out to the right, and he fills in a word on the crossword puzzle. This is all true—I am not exaggerating. This is going on, and I’m thinking, *I don’t care how smart this guy is, this is a completely disastrous briefing session*. I finished what I needed to say, and the newspaper finally came down.

He looked at me, and he said, “I think we have an inconsistency between your briefing two weeks ago and where you are now. Let me see if I can spell it

out.” And he went through the briefing I had done several weeks earlier in the Oval *perfectly*. He also went through what I had just said and concluded that there might be an inconsistency in our approach. I explained why there wasn’t. He poked and prodded some with respect to a couple of other points I had made. He had caught the nuance in what I was saying, not only the words in the order in which I had said them. At the end, we agreed on the game plan and we were off and running. We concluded the Framework agreement the next day.

I walked out of the room and Warren Christopher and Mickey both burst out laughing and said, “Your expression went from astonishment, to disdain and despair in the beginning of the briefing, to amazement that he could multitask to this degree and miss nothing.”

VISIT THE PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AT [millercenter.org/oralhistory](https://millercenter.org/oralhistory)





# NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENCY

In President Harry Truman's famous "Dear Bess" letters, Truman conversed with his wife and close advisor about his political decisions, as well as the quotidian details of their lives in the White House. In this letter, written June 3, 1945, while Bess Truman was traveling away from Washington, D.C., the president laments that the White House is "a lonesome place," recounts a fairly uneventful evening, and foreshadows a "good old-fashioned cleanup in the State Department."



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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Dear Bess:-

Sunday 4. M.  
June 3 45  
This is a lonesome place. Harry Vaughan and I came back to the White House and found he had just leaving. We should have taken her to the train - but I didn't think of it. Grew came in and I had to settle some matters for him. Then Harry & I went over to the Statler and attended a party for Steve Early, given by the White House Correspondents Association. It was a nice party. We stayed about an hour and then came back to the White House and had dinner. Harry

mentioned home and I went to work. When my eyes got tired of reading I went and got out the piano records for the radio and gave myself a concert. They brought me some orange juice and I went to bed at 10:30 and read a gossip phone conversation between a Justice of the Supreme Court and one of their Pearson's stooges in Vinson's office. It was funny but also full business. The so-called Palace Guard hate to give up. I'm causing them much worry I'm afraid.  
We're also on the edge of a good old fashioned cleanup in the

State Dept. Not at the top but in the middle. It's no wonder we have no adequate representation abroad.

Hope you had a nice trip. I wanted to go very badly but of course I could not. I talked to Natalie and she said the boys would be present to meet you. Hope my daughter got back on the train. I never saw her act so prima donnaish and I was not pleased I can tell you. Much love Harry.