

President Biden Announces 17 Key Nominations

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June 23, 2021

Briefing Room

• Statements and Releases

WASHINGTON – Today, President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate the following 17 individuals to serve in key roles:

- Michael Carpenter, Nominee for U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with rank of Ambassador
- Claire Cronin, Nominee for Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Ireland
- Jack Markell, Nominee for Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with rank of Ambassador
- Cindy Hensley McCain, Nominee for U.S. Representative to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture, with rank of Ambassador
- Homer Wilkes, Nominee for Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Department of Agriculture
- Raymond Limon, Nominee for Vice Chair of the Merit Systems Protection Board of Directors
- Max Vekich, Nominee for Member of the Federal Maritime Commission
- Stacey Brandenburg, Nominee for Trustee of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation
- Robert Garcia, Nominee for Trustee of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation
- Kamilah Forbes, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Christopher Morgan, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Ismael Ahmed, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Kinan Azmeh, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Huascar Medina, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Jake Shimabukuro, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Constance Williams, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts
- Fiona Whelan Prine, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Michael Carpenter, Nominee for U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with rank of Ambassador

Michael Carpenter is the Managing Director of the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia, and previously was Special Advisor for Europe and Eurasia in the Office of the Vice President. He also served as Director for Russia in the National Security Council. A former Foreign Service officer, Carpenter served in the Department of State as Deputy Director of the Office of Russian Affairs,

Special Assistant for the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Political-Military officer in the Office of European Security and Political Affairs, and Advisor on Regional Conflicts in the Office of Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts. He served overseas in Barbados, Slovenia and Poland. He has received numerous professional distinctions, including the Jamestown Foundation Distinguished Service Award and fellowships from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the International Research & Exchanges Board. Carpenter earned a B.A. at Stanford University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. He speaks Polish, Slovenian, Czech, French and German.

Claire Cronin, Nominee for Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Ireland

Claire Cronin currently serves as a Representative, and as Majority Leader, in the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. During her service as a legislator, Cronin was also Vice Chair, and then Chair, of the Committee on the Judiciary. As Chair of the Committee Cronin was the architect of significant pieces of legislation, including major criminal justice reform and police reform. Cronin has also served since 2003 as a Mediator/Arbitrator for Commonwealth Mediation in Brockton, MA. Prior to her election as Representative, Cronin maintained the Law Office of Claire Cronin in Brockton, Massachusetts. Earlier she was first a law clerk, and then an Associate Attorney at Wynn & Wynn, P.C. in Raynham, Massachusetts. Before that she worked in Liaison and Constituent Services in the Office of Massachusetts Governor, Edward King. Cronin earned her B.A. from Stonehill College and her J.D. degree from Suffolk University. She is the recipient of multiple honors and awards including the Jewish Community Relations Council Legislative Leadership Award (2020) and the Emerge Massachusetts 2020 Woman of the Year.

Jack Markell, Nominee for Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with rank of Ambassador

Jack Markell, a former Governor and State Treasurer of Delaware, is the President of Jack Markell Consulting, LLC. He is a former Senior Vice President of Comcast Corporation and Nextel Communications. He also has served as Chair of the National Governors Association, President of the Council of State Governments, and Chair of the Democratic Governors Association. Markell earned a Bachelors Degree in Development Studies and Economics at Brown University and an M.B.A. at the University of Chicago.

Cindy Hensley McCain, Nominee for U.S. Representative to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture, with rank of Ambassador

Cindy Hensley McCain is Chairman and Director of the Hensley Beverage Company in Phoenix, Arizona. She chairs the Board of Trustees and is a member of the Human Trafficking Council at the McCain Institute for International Leadership at Arizona State University. She is a Member of the Leadership Council at the Too Small to Fail Initiative in New York City, in addition to leadership roles in numerous other civic and

philanthropic organizations. McCain is also Co-Chair of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council, and a member of the Phoenix Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force. McCain received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Southern California.

Homer Wilkes, Nominee for Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Department of Agriculture

Dr. Homer Wilkes, a native of Port Gibson, Mississippi, currently serves as Director of Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Team. He is one of the five Federal Executive Council member to oversee the rebuilding of the Ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico after the BP Oil Spill of 2010. He served as the Acting Associate Chief of USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington during the period of 2010-2012. Dr. Wilkes' tenure with the United States Department of Agriculture spans over 41 years. During his tenure he has served as State Conservationist for Mississippi; Chief Financial Officer for NRCS in Washington, DC; Deputy State Conservationist for Mississippi; and Chief of Administrative Staff for the South Technical Center for NRCS in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dr. Wilkes also served as Naval Supply Officer in the United States Navy Reserves from November 1984 – April-2007.

He received his Bachelors, Master of Business Administration, and Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education from Jackson State University. He also successfully completed the USDA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SES CDP) through American University's Key Executive Leadership Certificate in Public Policy. Dr. Wilkes and his wife Kim, currently reside in Ridgeland, MS. They have three sons, Justin, Austin, and Harrison. He enjoys fishing, restoring antique vehicles and family activities.

Raymond Limon, Nominee for Vice Chair of the Merit Systems Protection Board of Directors

Raymond A. Limon is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity, and Chief Human Capital Officer, and he is a career member of the Senior Executive Service at the Department of the Interior (DOI). His Directorate provides strategic human capital; safety/health; and training policies and services for the Department's 70,000 plus employees serving in over 350 occupations and 2,400 locations. Before joining DOI, Limon led the State Department's Civil Service HR Management office. Ray has also served as the Chief Human Capital Officer at AmeriCorps (or the Corporation for National and Community Service), and chaired the Small Agency Human Resources Council, representing approximately 100 Federal agencies and organizations. He was also an attorney at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Office of General Counsel specializing in employment litigation and policy review; and he served as OPM's Director of the Office of Administrative Law Judges (ALJs), where he managed the government-wide personnel system for ALJs. Limon received his J.D. from Indiana University, Bloomington, and he is a former Peace Corps Volunteer (Honduras).

Max Vekich, Nominee for Member of the Federal Maritime Commission

Max Vekich a native of Aberdeen, Washington and the son to a father who was an army Staff Sergeant in the Pacific, Philippines, and Korea, with the Sixth and later the Second Infantry Divisions and mother who managed the production of Landmines and hand grenades at Lamb's Grays Harbor.

Vekich is a former elected official at the State House and won four straight terms to the Washington State House of Representatives. When elected, he was the youngest Democrat in the State House. Vekich served as chair of three committees during his tenure: Agriculture, Trade & Economic Development and Commerce & Labor. The Washington Historical Society recognized his efforts by awarding him the Robert Gray Medal. In 2004 Vekich moved to Seattle for work. He was promoted to "Supercargo" in 2005 where he worked in all Washington State Ports. In the public arena, he stayed engaged on matters of Port infrastructure and operations and was lured back into politics in 2009 as a candidate for Port of Seattle Commission. Vekich garnered 185,000 votes as a runner up. Since then, the Northwest Seaport Alliance, which he advocated for, has come into being combining Seattle and Tacoma container operations. He has weighed in on numerous port issues, like the reactivation of Terminal 5, which will be a reality in 2022.

Vekich is married to Marcee Stone, they have three adult children and four grandchildren.

Stacey Brandenburg, Nominee for Trustee of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation

Stacey M. Brandenburg is a distinguished privacy and technology lawyer, currently practicing as a shareholder at ZwillGen PLLC. Brandenburg has focused her career on emerging legal issues surrounding technology, including privacy, data, and consumer protection. She previously served as an attorney in the Federal Trade Commission's Division of Privacy and Identity Protection, and now works with clients to navigate new regulations and implement best practices for their consumer-facing policies and activities. Brandenburg also developed and taught a seminar on privacy law as an adjunct professor at American University's Washington College of Law.

Brandenburg has a long history with the Truman Foundation and believes strongly in its mission – a 1995 Truman Scholar from Georgia, she spent a year working for the Foundation before law school, where she helped nurture and sustain the Scholar community and its programming. She has continued to support the Foundation's efforts through Friends of the Truman Foundation. Brandenburg is a graduate of New York University Law School and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she was a John Motley Morehead Scholar. Brandenburg is married to Derek Ludwin, and they have two children – Andrew and Elizabeth.

Robert Garcia, Nominee for Trustee of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation

Dr. Robert Garcia is an educator and the 28th Mayor of Long Beach. Mayor Garcia immigrated to the United States at age 5 and was raised in Southern California. The Mayor, a college and university educator, holds an M.A. from the University of Southern California and an Ed.D. in Higher Education from Cal State Long Beach, where he also earned his B.A. in Communications. Mayor Garcia leads a city made up of nearly 500,000 residents, 6,000 city employees, an airport and the second largest container seaports in the world. He is focused on making the City of Long Beach a leader in education, public health and climate protection. As Mayor, he has championed progressive education policy, launched an aggressive climate plan, supported workers by increasing wages; and fought to expand and protect rights for immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community and women — including appointing a female majority to serve on city commissions for the first time in history.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Garcia launched a national model for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. His city became the first jurisdiction in the State of California to vaccinate public school teachers, which allowed one of the largest school districts in the state to reopen campuses. Mayor Garcia was the first mayor in the country to rollout a comprehensive city economic recovery plan — the Long Beach Recovery Act — to reinvigorate the economy, build a healthier community and get people back to work. To date, 99% of all senior residents in Long Beach have been vaccinated and the city has been hailed by Governor Newsom and national news outlets as a model for its public health and economic response. He is married to Matthew Mendez Garcia, a professor of political science at California State University, Long Beach.

Kamilah Forbes, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Kamilah Forbes is an esteemed award-winning director and producer for theater and television who currently serves as the Executive Producer at the world-famous Apollo Theater. Forbes is noted for having a strong commitment to the development of creative works by, for, and about the Hip-Hop generation. In addition to her work at the Apollo, Forbes' directing credits include *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, written by two-time Pulitzer prize-winning writer Lynn Nottage; *The Blood Quilt*, written by Katori Hall; and *Sunset Baby*, by MacArthur Genius recipient Dominique Morisseau. She has also worked as associate director on the Tony Award-winning *A Raisin in the Sun*, and Emmy Award-winning "The Wiz Live" for NBC. Other Broadway credits include *The Mountaintop* and *Stick Fly*.

Forbes' most recent directorial work, "Between the World and Me" aired as a special event on HBO and HBO Max in November 2020. Her directorial work on "Between the World and Me" has brought her a host of acclaim and recognition, including a nomination for Best Direction for an NAACP Image Award and a Critics Choice Award nomination.

Throughout her career Forbes has won numerous awards for both directing and producing, including the 2019 NBTF Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award, a Root 100 Award, an NAACP Image Award, a Helen Hayes and Barrymore Award, and an Audelco. Forbes' recent projects include directing the sold-out world premiere, tour, and theatrical adaption of Ta-Nehisi Coates' New York Times best-selling novel *Between the World and*

Me, which premiered at the Apollo Theater in 2018 and returned for encore performances in 2019. In addition to her work at the Apollo Theater, Forbes is set to direct the Broadway premiere of *Soul Train* alongside producer Questlove, playwright Dominique Morisseau, and choreographer Camille A. Brown.

Christopher Morgan, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Christopher K. Morgan is a choreographer, educator, facilitator, curator, and arts administrator. Known as a thoughtful advocate for cultural integrity, inclusivity, and diverse representation in the studio and on stage, his Native Hawaiian ancestry and wide-ranging international performance career influence all aspects of his work. As Executive Artistic Director of Dance Place in Washington, D.C., Morgan stewarded the organization through the triple pandemics of 2020 maintaining the entire staff with no layoffs or furloughs, while continuing to pay artists and teachers.

Since 2006 Morgan has directed Art Omi: Dance, an annual collaborative residency for international choreographers in New York, where he created an utterly unique international cultural exchange program. Frequently sought as a speaker and grants reviewer, he has been at the forefront of national discussions on equity in the arts. He currently serves on the board of the National Performance Network, is a member of the Association of Performing Arts Professionals' Equitable Partnership Working Group, and on the Association of Performing Arts Professionals 2022 Conference Planning Committee. Born in Orange County, CA, he resides in Takoma Park, MD with his husband, opera director Kyle Lang.

Ismael Ahmed, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Ismael Ahmed most recently served as the Associate Provost for Metropolitan Impact at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. In this position, Ahmed was responsible for connecting academic initiatives for 9,000 students and 540 full and part-time faculty with over 500 community, business, and governmental partners. Prior to that, he served in Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's administration as Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, the state's second-largest department. He co-founded the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in 1971 and was appointed executive director in 1983, growing it into a national human service and advocacy agency with affiliates in 24 cities.

The son of first-generation immigrants, Ahmed is co-founder of The Arab American National Museum in Dearborn and serves as an executive member of its advisory board. Since 1984, he has lead Detroit's Concert of Colors – one of the largest world music festivals in the United States – which he co-curates and co-chairs. He also produces and hosts "This Island Earth" on WDET Public Radio Detroit, where he conducts multi-cultural music & arts programs with music and guests that represent culture from across the planet.

Kinan Azmeh, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Originally from Damascus, Syria, Kinan Azmeh brings his music to all corners of the world as a soloist, composer and improviser. Notable appearances include the Opera Bastille, Paris; Tchaikovsky Grand Hall, Moscow; Carnegie Hall and the UN General Assembly, New York; the Royal Albert hall, London; Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires; Der Philharmonie, Berlin; the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, Washington DC; the Mozarteum, Salzburg, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie; and in his native Syria at the opening concert of the Damascus Opera House.

He has appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Qatar Philharmonic and the Syrian Symphony Orchestra among others, and has shared the stage with such musical luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Daniel Barenboim, Marcel Khalife, John McLaughlin, Francois Rabbath Aynur and Jivan Gasparian.

Azmeh serves as artistic director of the Damascus Festival Chamber Players, a pan-Arab ensemble dedicated to contemporary music from the Arab world. He has also been playing with the Silkroad Ensemble since 2012, whose 2017 Grammy Award-winning album "Sing Me Home" features Azmeh as a clarinetist and composer. Azmeh is a graduate of New York's Juilliard School as a student of Charles Neidich, and of both the Damascus High Institute of Music where he studied with Shukry Sahwki, Nicolay Viovanof and Anatoly Moratof, and Damascus University's School of Electrical Engineering. Azmeh earned his doctorate degree in music from the City University of New York in 2013.

Huascar Medina, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Huascar Medina is the 7th Poet Laureate of Kansas. He currently works with the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission reimagining and developing innovative programming for the poet laureateship. He is a peer facilitator for Mid-America Arts Alliance's Artist INC program. Artist INC is dedicated to the professional development of artists of all disciplines in the Midwestern region and connects them to the resources, tools, and opportunities necessary to build entrepreneurial skills and strengthen their artistic practice. As Literary Editor for sevenfifty magazine, he provides a platform for Kansas writers by reviewing and spotlighting their work. He is the host and creator of Kansas is Lit on KSEF-DB, an online radio show specifically created to increase the visibility and reach of Kansas writers. He serves as a Staff Editor at South Broadway Press out of Denver, Colorado. He is also an Op-Ed writer at Kansas Reflector, a nonprofit news organization providing in-depth reporting and diverse opinions to all Kansans. Medina proudly serves on the ArtsConnect board and Kansas Book Festival council. He takes pride in the rise of Midwest artists and has dedicated himself to the emergence of "The Prairie Renaissance".

Jake Shimabukuro, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Jake Shimabukuro is a career ukulele player who has wide experience in the arts. He first gained notice in the late 1990s with the popular musical group Pure Heart. After the group dissolved, his fame as a solo artist spread throughout Hawaii and eventually to

Japan. There, in 2001, Shimabukuro signed a historic deal with Epic Records/Sony Music, which formed the basis of a career punctuated by a string of hit albums and standing room audiences.

Shimabukuro has also played with world-renowned orchestras and at prestigious venues such as the Hollywood Bowl, Lincoln Center, and Sydney Opera House, and at music festivals including Bonnaroo, SXSW and Fuji Rock Festival. He has also performed for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Shimabukuro continues to write and record, while maintaining an international concert schedule of 140 live performances a year. He is a loving husband and proud father of two boys. In addition to balancing his career with family, Shimabukuro also remains firmly rooted in his commitment to community, frequently performing at schools in Hawaii and overseas to urge kids to “say no to drugs” and inspire them to find their passion. In the process, Shimabukuro has served as a Pied Piper in the booming popularity of the ukulele, spreading his belief that the world would be a better place if everyone played the ukulele.

Constance Williams, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Constance Hess Williams has deep and varied experience as an entrepreneur and consultant in the private sector and as an elected official in the public sector. She graduated from Barnard College with a B.A. in English and earned her M.B.A. from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Following graduation from college, Williams worked in New York as an editorial assistant at Doubleday & Company, answered viewer mail at NBC, and began a photographic stock house. After she married and moved to Philadelphia, Williams worked for Running Press, as a consultant for the Wharton Small Business Development Center and as a program officer for the Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships. With a background in publishing, marketing, and small business and financial consulting, Williams was the economic development and small business coordinator for Pennsylvania’s 13th Congressional District

Williams is widely known throughout her community for her strong record of involvement with a special focus on education, the arts, and economic development across broadly diverse regional organizations. She served as the Chair of the Board of The Philadelphia Museum of Art and is now Chair Emerita. She was also a trustee of the National Museum of American Jewish History, Steppingstone Scholars Inc. Barnard College, The Episcopal Academy, The Baldwin School, and Pine Manor College and The Kimmel Center of Performing Arts in Philadelphia. She is a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania.

Williams resides in Haverford, Pennsylvania with her husband, Sankey Williams. They have two daughters and five grandchildren.

Fiona Whelan Prine, Nominee for Member of the National Council on the Arts

Fiona Whelan Prine brings an expansive viewpoint to the American roots music community as President of Oh Boy Records, the country's second-oldest independent record label still in operation. In that role, she oversees the multiple Grammy Award-winning recordings and publishing copyrights of her late husband, American songwriter John Prine. She also serves as Founder and President of the newly established Hello in There Foundation. As one of Nashville's most prominent and dedicated philanthropists, Whelan Prine has volunteered countless hours on behalf of Thistle Farms, a global nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to helping women survivors recover and heal from poverty, prostitution, trafficking, and addiction. Through unique annual fundraising events, often with an appearance by John Prine, her initiatives have helped raise more than \$3 million for the organization. In the last year alone, her community involvement has raised more than \$1 million for important social causes, including those related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Born and raised in Ireland, Whelan Prine is the eldest of six daughters born to Donal and Mary Whelan. She served as Business Manager for Windmill Lane Studios in Dublin, considered Ireland's premiere recording studio. Whelan Prine met John while working there with artists such as U2, Van Morrison and many others, and they later married in Nashville, Tennessee, where together they raised their three sons. Whelan Prine received her U.S. citizenship in 2004.

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Next Post: Remarks by Vice President Harris Before a Listening Session with Civil Rights and Voting Rights Groups

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June 23, 2021 • Speeches and Remarks

Next Post



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