

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



The challenges facing international exchange programs are extraordinary. From draconian proposed funding cuts for federally-funded exchange programs to administration efforts to significantly change and restrict a number of privately funded exchange programs – a wide array of the international exchange programs we all so deeply care about have been targeted.

In response, we have taken extraordinary measures to advance public diplomacy, and these have made us stronger. We have strengthened the case for exchanges, formed a broad coalition of organizations, and engaged individual stakeholders globally. Within is just a snapshot of some of our key efforts in 2017.

## ADVOCACY

### **Advocacy Day & Congressional Reception**

We held our most successful Advocacy Day to date – 110 Alliance member advocates participated in our March event, visiting a record 170 congressional offices. For the first time ever, we also hosted a congressional reception in conjunction with Advocacy Day that drew over 200 attendees, including congressional staff and State Department representatives.

### **Congressional Dear Colleague Letters**

We led an advocacy campaign to garner support for House and Senate “Dear Colleague” letters in support of exchange program funding in FY2018. Thanks to the exchange community’s united efforts, both letters were successful: The Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA) House letter had 120 signatures and the Sen. Cory Booker Senate letter had 29 signers – 10 more than last year. Both letters were bipartisan.

### **Appropriations Requests**

We submitted over 40 written appropriations requests to House and Senate offices in support of robust FY2018 exchange program funding. This is almost double the number of requests we submitted last year. We further submitted written testimony to the House and Senate State-Foreign Operations (SFOPS) Appropriations Subcommittees in support of exchange program funding. In addition, we held in-person meetings with the offices of 20 House and Senate SFOPS appropriators to discuss our concerns about the administration’s FY2018 budget proposal, stress the need for robust exchange program funding, and educate appropriators about the variety and impact of exchange programs. In response to advocacy from the Alliance, many of your organizations, and others, Congress defied the administration’s request for deep cuts. Instead they provided a budget for ECA in FY2017 that is among the highest exchange program budgets ever. Thus far, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have allocated strong budgets in their respective SFOPS bills for the next fiscal year.

### **Road Shows**

We conducted five “road shows” to visit with Key Members of Congress. Thanks to the help of many of you, we were able to hold very successful meetings with Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA) in Allentown and Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) in Milwaukee, as well as with the local staffs of Rep. Bill Keating (D-MA) in Cape Cod, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in Manchester, and Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) in Little Rock. All of these meetings featured constituents involved with exchange programs. They did a phenomenal job showcasing the importance of international education and exchange, and the positive impact on their local communities.

### **Congressional resolutions**

We led advocacy campaigns to support bipartisan resolutions in the Senate and House that recognize the value of international exchange and education. The Senate resolution was led by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and John Boozman (R-AR), while the House resolution was led by the co-chairs of the International Exchange and Study Caucus, Representatives Jim Himes (D-CT) and Steve Pearce (R-NM).

## Ambassadors' letter supporting ECA appropriation

With the help of our appropriations working group and Alliance members' various networks, we put together for the first time ever a letter from 163 former U.S. ambassadors to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of the ECA budget. The letter was very positively received.

## BAHA advocacy

We engaged in a slew of efforts to counter the administration's reported efforts to severely restrict or eliminate the au pair, camp counselor, intern, trainee, and SWT programs. We formed and have been working very closely with a broad coalition which includes an Alliance member Working Group, state-based advocacy teams, host employers, and other associations. We have actively promoted and utilized the Americans for Cultural Exchange initiative for grass tops advocacy. Together with other organizations and associations, we have supported SWT and other programs by:

- Sending letters to the Secretaries of State, Homeland Security and Labor in June, signed by over 120 U.S. host businesses, community leaders, and sponsoring organizations
- Recruiting 16 senators and 31 representatives on letters to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson
- Supporting a Senate Appropriations Committee directive to the administration that requires, before any modification to programs, consultation with Congress, an analysis of the impact on the economy and public diplomacy, and a full regulatory process
- Encouraging multiple governors' letters to the Trump administration
- Facilitating over 20,000 constituent letters to Congress
- Collecting 32 association signatures on letters to Secretary Tillerson and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross
- Supporting a House resolution recognizing that J-1 visa programs are vital to the economy and national interests of the United States

These efforts are extensive, but more engagement will be needed in the months and years ahead.

## DATA & COMMUNICATIONS

### SWT Report

We commissioned and released a major, comprehensive report on the Summer Work Travel (SWT) program that has already been used and cited widely by the SWT stakeholder community, Members of Congress, and the media. The report was conducted by the research firm EurekaFacts. We sincerely thank our SWT report working group for steering the report from start to finish and helping us produce such a valuable resource.

### Increased Communications & Media Engagement

We continued to increase communications with our membership in a variety of ways, including a stronger social media presence, additional resources on the Alliance website, messaging and talking points for our members to help defend programs under attack, and a new section in our Weekly Digest that provides updates on administration and congressional efforts pertinent to our work. We issued a number of press releases and had several opinion pieces published. Particularly around the BAHA advocacy effort, we were able to significantly raise our media profile. We further conducted an Advocacy 2.0 Workshop in San Francisco and provided advocacy and policy updates at numerous events and conferences, including the NAFSA 2017 Annual Conference in Los Angeles, which drew media attention.

We engaged Communications Consultant Ranit Schmelzer who has been working closely with us and two of our working groups on developing communications strategies closely aligned with our advocacy strategy to protect federally-funded programs from severe funding cuts, as well as our advocacy efforts around the BAHA Executive Order implementation. As a result of our work, over 480 positive news stories have been written to-date about privately-funded exchange programs.



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