



February 2026 Newsletter



Dr. Liane Hentschke
Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Greetings from the Tennessee World Affairs Council!

Nashville and several other areas across Tennessee were significantly impacted by the January snowstorm, facing major power outages, home displacements, and other serious disruptions. We extend our sincere respect and gratitude to everyone who worked tirelessly to restore services and support our communities in their recovery. The resilience and spirit of the people of Tennessee continue to inspire us. Throughout these challenges, TNWAC remained committed to ensuring that our programs and obligations progressed as planned.

This month, our programming focused on two key regions of the Southern Hemisphere and how their growing economies and natural resources are increasingly shaping U.S. foreign policy and global partnerships. On **February 4**, we welcomed **Ambassador Michael McKinley**, whose distinguished diplomatic career and deep knowledge of Latin America provided valuable insight into the region's economic development and its evolving partnership with the United States. On **February 18**, we will host **Chidi Blyden**, a former U.S. foreign policy advisor, whose expertise spans national security, defense, economic development, and international affairs. Ms. Blyden will address Africa's global rise and the strategic partnerships shaping its relationship with the United States and other global powers, including China.

As Tennessee's role in the global economy continues to expand — from trade and investment to workforce development and international engagement — TNWAC is undertaking a strategic review of its mission and future direction. Central to this process is the voice of our members, donors, and supporters. To ensure that our programs remain relevant and impactful, we have launched a community-wide survey.

We kindly remind you that the *final day* to complete the questionnaire is *February 16, 2026*. Your input is essential in helping shape TNWAC's next chapter. [**Click to complete the survey.**](#)

Thank you for your continued support. We encourage you to renew your commitment to TNWAC through your membership and donations, and by inviting friends and colleagues to attend our upcoming events listed at [TNWAC.org](https://www.tnwac.org).

With my best wishes,

Explore International Careers

HUMAN RIGHTS / SOCIAL IMPACT OFFICER

In this role, you will support programs that promote human rights, social inclusion, and equitable access to opportunities. You will conduct research, coordinate projects, and work with international and local partners to strengthen protections for vulnerable and marginalized populations. [Learn more...](#)

CLIMATE POLICY / SUSTAINABILITY ANALYST

In this role, you will support the design, implementation, and evaluation of climate and sustainability initiatives. You will analyze environmental data, contribute to policy development, and collaborate with governments, NGOs, and multilateral organizations to advance climate resilience and sustainable development objectives. [Learn more...](#)

Volunteer Spotlight:



Deborah Monroe

This month, we are thrilled to spotlight Deborah (Deb) Monroe, one of our longest and most dedicated events volunteers.

A Nashville resident and longtime public servant, Deb brings extraordinary global and national security experience to TNWAC, having served 26 years as an intelligence officer with the Defense Intelligence Agency before retiring in 2021. Her distinguished career included senior leadership roles across the Middle East, Africa, and the UK, as well as multiple assignments supporting the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A recipient of numerous national intelligence and defense awards, Deb now continues her commitment to service by supporting TNWAC programs and actively engaging in our local community. We are honored to have her as part of the TNWAC family!

Did You Know?

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to protect the rights and well-being of children. UNICEF supports access to education, healthcare, nutrition, clean water, and emergency assistance, helping children and families build safer and healthier futures.

Sponsor Highlight:



THE KIND WORLD FOUNDATION

The Kind World Foundation is dedicated to expanding access to education, empowering communities, and fostering global citizenship through strategic partnerships and impactful programs. The Foundation's commitment to equity, innovation, and cross-cultural understanding supports its mission to create opportunities that help individuals and communities thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Thank you for your support!



Board Member Highlight: **Elena Camacho Byrd**

The Tennessee World Affairs Council is honored to highlight Elena Camacho Byrd, a Board member whose life story and career reflect a deep commitment to global understanding and service. Born in Lausanne, Switzerland, and raised in Cuba before fleeing to the United States during the Cuban Revolution, Elena brings a powerful personal perspective on global history and migration.

She holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Cambridge, and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Elena spent more than 15 years working in public health across Haiti and the Dominican Republic, supporting physicians and expanding access to care, and has also dedicated herself to education as a teacher and tutor in the U.S. Now an active volunteer and longtime Board member of the Tennessee Poison Center, Elena continues to serve the Nashville community with the same global outlook that defines TNWAC's mission.

Guest Columnist

The views and opinions expressed in our guest column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tennessee World Affairs Council.

For 40 years, my career was in the private sector. Attracted to the culture and history of Japan from age 18, I focused on Japanese studies in college and graduate school. I chose a career in U.S. – Japanese business because I wanted to be a part of Japan's unique contributions to the international economy. The resulting revenues stimulated me to work hard and succeed.

My world changed when a friend approached me about an opportunity to oversee the major giving program at United Way of Greater Nashville. I had always considered United Way a reputable nonprofit that helped the needy, but I had not fully appreciated its ongoing struggle to generate revenues. When I learned that 1/3 of its annual campaign dollars came from generous individual donors contributing \$10,000 or more **annually**, I took on the challenge of engaging and growing that special group.

I never looked back upon entering the world of nonprofits. Why? Nonprofits are...

- Mission-driven.
- Volunteer-based.
- Support an expansive range of societal needs, including the most vulnerable, the arts, our environment, education, and even global affairs, such as the Tennessee World Affairs Council.
- Managed by intelligent, dedicated internal and board leadership.
- Reliant for survival upon generous philanthropic donors.

Guest Columnist Continued

For these reasons, and more, nonprofits are essential pillars of every community. There is also a business case for the importance of nonprofits.

Consider this:

- The U.S. has 1.3 million charitable nonprofits that feed, heal, shelter, educate, inspire, enlighten, and nurture people of every age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status, from coast to coast.
- 12.8 million people, approximately 10 percent of private sector jobs in the United States, work in the nonprofit sector.
- There are slightly more nonprofit jobs than manufacturing jobs (12.7 million) in the U.S. Only the retail & food/hospitality industries claim more jobs: 15.4 million and 13.4 million, respectively.
- Nonprofits collectively paid more than \$870 billion in wages in 2022.

In fostering a better society, nonprofits are challenged daily to secure critical resources on their own. Hard-won nonprofit funding sources are:

- 32% - individuals
- 20% - government
- 20% - program services
- 15% - foundations & corporations
- 13% - dues/memberships

The Tennessee World Affairs Council is a mission-driven nonprofit that helps Tennesseans understand global issues and their impact on our state – a particularly relevant mission in this age of international economic interdependence. Accomplishing our goals requires TNWAC, too, to endeavor daily to secure critical resources to fulfill our mission.

We thank you if you already support us. If not, we hope you will consider participating in our informative, unique programs and in investing in us. Click [here](#) to become a member and [here](#) to make a one-time gift.

Your generosity guarantees **you**, the philanthropist, an expansive range of knowledge and stimulating friendships - both critical to personal and business growth.

Sources: [Urban Institute's](#) report, [Nonprofit Trends and Impacts](#) 2021-2023; the NonProfit Quarterly, March 2025



Celeste Wilson

Member of the Board of Directors

MEMBERSHIP 2026



JOIN NOW

Start the new year with a global perspective! By joining or renewing your Tennessee World Affairs Council membership for 2026, you're investing in a more informed and connected Tennessee. Your support brings world-class speakers, educational programs, and international engagement opportunities to our community, right here in our own backyard.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- **Discounted Programming** – Enjoy a *35% discount* on TNWAC events and programs
- **Exclusive Event Invitations** – Receive invitations to members-only events featuring prominent speakers
- **Complimentary “Global Post” Newsletter** – Stay informed with curated insights on world affairs
- **Access to the National Conference of the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA)** – Engage with global thought leaders at this prestigious gathering
- **Free Webinars** – You can register for any webinar and attend for free

STUDENT

\$25

MILITARY

\$35

TEACHER (K-12)

\$35

INDIVIDUAL

\$85

FAMILY

\$140

JANUARY EVENT RECAP



TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES



INSIDER'S JAPAN

Mar 11 - Mar 23



FINLAND'S ARCTIC MAGNIFICENCE 2026

Mar 12 - Mar 20

REGISTER NOW



Support TNWAC

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, our mission is to **promote international awareness, understanding**, and connections to enhance the region's global stature and to prepare Tennesseans to thrive in our increasingly complex and interconnected world.

1

Bring a friend to one of our events and encourage them to join us as a member!

2

Introduce our team to an **expert in your network** to join us as a speaker in 2026!

3

Encourage **businesses you love to join TNWAC** as a corporate member or sponsor!



DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

Africa's Global Rise and Why It Matters to the United States

Chidi Blyden, *CEO and Principal
Culturally Bound*

SAVE THE DATE



**Troy
Stangarone**

March 4, 2026



**Major General
Corey Martin**

March 18, 2026



Frank Lavin

April 2, 2026



**Ambassador
Georg Sparber**

April 23, 2026