



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

PRESS RELEASES

CSBA Announces 2020 Congressional Defense Seminar Fellows

October 21, 2020

Related Expert: Thomas G. Mahnken

Washington, D.C., October 21, 2020 – The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), the world’s premier center for understanding future international competition and conflict, today announced a new group of fellows for the CSBA Congressional Defense Seminar Series. This seminar series is an in-depth bipartisan program for Congressional staff members. This evening series of topical seminars aims to provide staffers with the tools to master the conceptual foundations of defense policy as well as the intricacies of contemporary national security processes. The forum, which will feature senior CSBA scholars and outside national security experts, will launch its second season this week with a session on strategy and force planning.

Following an extensive application process, the incoming CSBA Congressional Defense Seminar Fellows are a bipartisan group of rising leaders, hailing from all corners of the Hill, including personal, committee, CBO, and leadership offices in the House and Senate.



Betsy S. Dudley

Senior Legislative Assistant, Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN-9)

Elizabeth “Betsy” Dudley is currently the Senior Legislative Assistant for Congressman Steve Cohen (D-TN) where she covers foreign affairs, defense, homeland security, appropriations, and veterans as well as Congressman Cohen’s work on the Science, Space and Technology Committee and the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission). She was previously a Legislative Aide for U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD), where she helped manage the policy work and managed constituent correspondence for foreign affairs, defense, labor, Federal employees, trade, and economic issues. Betsy grew up in Annapolis and holds a Master of Public Policy from the University of Maryland and a Bachelor of Science in Diplomacy and International Relations from Seton Hall University.



Chris Ringer

Legislative Correspondent, Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-MO-04)

Chris Ringer is currently the Legislative Correspondent to Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler (MO-04). His portfolio includes Science, Space and Technology (SST), Financial Services and Housing Issues. He previously worked for Congressman Jeff Duncan (SC-03) and the House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee under Chairman Paul Cook (CA-08).



John Kerman

Assistant Analyst, Congressional Budget Office

John Kerman is an Assistant Analyst for the National Security Division at the Congressional Budget Office. He graduated with a degree in Economics from Middlebury College in 2018.



Nick Runkel

Military Legislative Assistant, Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR-3)

Nick Runkel serves as the Military Legislative Assistant for Congressman Steve Womack (AR-3), who serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Defense. Nick has worked for Congressman Womack since May 2017 where he began his career as the legislative correspondent. In addition to handling the defense portfolio, he covers policy related to agriculture, trade, transportation, elections/campaign finance, and veterans' affairs. Prior to working for Congressman Womack, Nick interned for Huntington Ingalls Industries and worked on state-level campaigns in his home state of Virginia. Nick graduated from Virginia Tech in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History.



Soleil Sykes

Staff Assistant, Senate Armed Service Committee Personnel Subcommittee

Soleil Sykes serves as the staff assistant for the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), where she works on a range of military and civilian personnel issues, including personnel management, healthcare, and servicemember and family readiness. Prior to joining SASC in November 2018, Soleil interned for Senator Deb Fischer as a Running Start Congressional Fellow. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Economy and a Concentration in French Language from Antioch College.



Howard Wang

Policy Analyst, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

Howard Wang is a Policy Analyst for Security and Foreign Affairs at the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, where he researches emerging capabilities in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as well as Chinese influence in East and Southeast Asia. Before joining the Commission staff, he was a management consultant at Guidehouse. Howard is a Doctor of International Affairs candidate at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, where he is researching the Chinese Communist Party's sea power strategy.



Blake Souter

Military Legislative Assistant, Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

Raised in rural Oregon, Blake entered the U.S. Army after high school where he was assigned to the 62nd Engineer Battalion out of Fort Hood, Texas. He deployed with his unit in support of OIF 05-06 to the Baghdad and Taji areas of Iraq for 12 months. He deployed again with his unit in support of OEF 07-08 to Paktika Province, Afghanistan for 15 months supporting a provincial reconstruction team. Blake separated from the Army in 2009 and returned home where he earned a B.A. in Political Science with a focus on Russia at Portland State University, Oregon and later earned his M.A. in Global Security at American University, Washington D.C. Blake is a Truman National Security Project, Defense Council member, has served on the Senate Armed Services Committee supporting the Emerging Threats and Capabilities portfolio and as a Legislative Assistant and Defense and Foreign Policy Analyst for Senator Tim Kaine. Blake is currently the National Security Legislative Assistant for Senator Tammy Baldwin supporting her work as a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.



Mike Calcagni

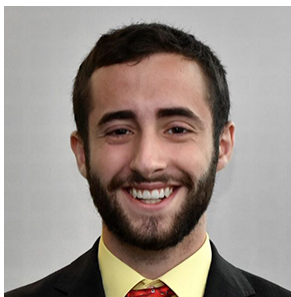
Senior Military Legislative Assistant, Rep. Michael Turner (R-OH-10)

Mike is the Military Legislative Assistant for Congressman Michael Turner (OH-10), who represents Wright Patterson Air Force Base. In this role, Mike manages the Congressman's national security portfolio as it pertains to his assignment on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and his position as Vice President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. He joined Team Turner in early 2019.

Prior to taking on this role, Mike was an active duty member of the National Guard serving in the Army Congressional Fellowship Program with assignments to Army House Liaison Division, Office of Legislative Liaison and the Office of Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-02).

Mike is a Field Artillery and Military Police branch qualified Army Officer and continues to maintain membership as a traditional guardsman in the Rhode Island Army National Guard. He is a Major / O-4, has served in multiple command assignments and has deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Currently, Mike is the Battalion Executive Officer of 1st Battalion, 103rd Field Artillery Regiment.

Mike is a Certified Public Accountant. He has completed a master's degree in Legislative Affairs from George Washington University in 2016, a master's degree in Accounting from Boston College in 2005 and bachelor's degree in Finance and Accounting from Providence College in 2004, where he was also commissioned from the Army ROTC program as a Distinguished Military Graduate. He recently graduated from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.



Griffin Cannon

Staff Assistant, Senate Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces and Cybersecurity subcommittees

Griffin Cannon is the staff assistant for the Subcommittees on Strategic Forces and Cybersecurity of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a B.A. in Political Science where he was a certificate fellow with the International Security Center. His professional interests include nuclear affairs, wargaming, and naval policy.



Daniel Bleiberg

Legislative Assistant, Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV)

Daniel Bleiberg serves as a Legislative Assistant for Senator Jacky Rosen of Nevada. Daniel covers foreign affairs, defense, and cybersecurity policy, and acts as the Senator's adviser on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. He also manages the Senate Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Anti-Semitism. Previously, Daniel worked for Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL) and staffed her on the Appropriations and Foreign Affairs Committees.

A Los Angeles native, Daniel graduated from Tufts University in 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations, and graduated from Tel Aviv University in 2014 with a Master's Degree in Political Science, where he focused on security studies.



Jeremiah van Auken

Staff Assistant, Senate Appropriations Committee Defense, State, Foreign Operations, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs subcommittee

Jeremiah Van Auken is the Staff Assistant for the Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense. Jeremiah studied History and Political Science and graduated Cum Laude from Xavier University in 2018. Jeremiah worked on the re-election campaigns for the Mayor of Cincinnati and, after graduation, became the Political Director for State Representative Jonathan Dever. In his free time, Jeremiah is an amateur chef, likes to jog, and enjoys listening to funk and R&B music.

In addition to offering deeply researched, independent assessments of this subject matter, the CSBA Congressional Defense Seminar Series will provide a nonpartisan forum to staffers to build relationships and engage with subject matter experts on emerging trends in technology, the defense innovation base, and geopolitics. According to Dr. Thomas G. Mahnken, CSBA's President and CEO, "This program is deliberately designed to help busy Hill staffers become better consumers of defense information and to help them command the core concerns of long-term strategy, the changing character of warfare, and evolving concepts of deterrence. We also hope to help engage and develop the next generation of defense policy leaders in an environment that is as socially engaging as it is intellectually demanding."

About the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

CSBA is an independent, nonpartisan policy research institute established to promote innovative thinking and debate about national security strategy and investment options. CSBA's assessments focus on key questions related to existing and emerging threats to U.S. national security, and its goal is to enable policymakers to make informed decisions on matters of strategy, security policy, and resource allocation.

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