The Government Affairs and Public Engagement (GPE) team is pleased to present this 2020 Strategic Engagement and Communications Plan.

Over the past two years, the Commission has traveled to small towns, large cities, and rural communities, speaking to countless Americans in church basements, military barracks, and community centers across the country. Through informal conversations with citizens, testimony provided at public hearings, meetings with hundreds of stakeholder groups, and thousands of public comments, the Commission has fashioned a compelling vision and comprehensive roadmap for engaging more Americans in service to meet our nation’s security and domestic needs and strengthen our democracy.

In order to advance the Commission’s vision of a culture of service, it is essential to have a robust and sustained effort to release, amplify, and build momentum for enactment of the Commission’s recommendations. This is the first time any entity has holistically and comprehensively undertaken a review of all forms of service and the Selective Service process. No Commission wants its report to “collect dust on a shelf” - and that couldn’t be more true with this Commission given its broad mandate, vital subject matter, and bold recommendations. Put simply, to achieve a moonshot, you need a powerful launch.

In order to raise awareness and build momentum for the Commission’s recommendations, GPE has developed this draft Strategic Engagement and Communications Plan. It is a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic approach that outlines GPE’s proposed priorities and activities for the coming year including goals, audiences, major lines of effort, and phasing. It builds off of the GPE plan presented at Hyde Park, taking into account new information including budget, staffing, and what the Commission decided on recommendations. The full version of the plan provides a deeper discussion of these elements and includes annexes on budget, stakeholder mapping, engagement and editorial calendars, media lists, and more.

This plan is iterative and dynamic and will change when we have new information or opportunities. We look forward to getting Commissioner input to fine-tune the plan to ensure the Commission’s hard work and thoughtful recommendations get the attention they deserve.

GPE 2020 Goals

The GPE team has identified three priority goals to guide its work for the Commission’s final year:

1. Raise widespread awareness of Commission’s recommendations.
2. Build momentum and buy-in to support enactment of the Commission’s recommendations through legislation and executive action.
3. Amplify the value and importance of all forms of service to help create a culture of service.
Strategy Highlights

Following are highlights of key strategies and tactics in the GPE plan:

- **Gaining Stakeholder Buy-In**: Given the wide scope and large number of recommendations, the short legislative window for Congress, and the overlay of a presidential election, it is unlikely that that many recommendations will be enacted before the Commission closes its doors in September 2020. In order to ensure that our recommendations continue to be considered, we must build and manage relationships with organizations that will carry forward the recommendations after we are gone.

- **Taking Inside Track**: Most of our previous Hill and Administration outreach has focused on introducing the Commission’s work. While that will continue, we are shifting to a new phase that includes carefully vetting the Commission’s policy recommendations with key government stakeholders and collecting intelligence on how these proposals would be received. This will include facilitating legislative language discussions between OGC and committee counsel. Targeted policy conversations with important Congressional committees and offices will help us to continue refine both content and messaging. Insights from these discussions may also inform the legislative proposal drafting process and final report writing. Starting these confidential conversations with key Administration and Hill staffers early in the process can help increase likelihood of success.

- **Using Multiple Communication Vehicles**: The Commission’s core product is its recommendations. The final report is the primary vessel carrying the recommendations, but not the only one. GPE will work with RAW and OGC to develop a range of supplementary materials to communicate and advance the recommendations - fact sheets, talking points, statistics, social media graphics, etc. We will also use digital strategies to reach different demographic groups including videos, blogs, social media, and our website.

- **Coordinating Our Work**: The goals, strategies, and work plans for GPE’s three teams - Government Affairs, External Affairs, and Public Affairs are integrated within GPE and in synch with RAW, OGC, and OPPS teams. For example: Government Affairs has worked with other teams in the Commission to identify external groups who directly and indirectly influence our government partners and the policymaking process, making them critical engagement partners. Public Affairs develops internal and external messaging products to keep our partners and stakeholders informed and connected.

- **Engaging Our Commissioners**: Commissioners are key to our engagement and communications strategy and we will be putting you to work! From meeting with Hill contacts to keynoting stakeholder conferences to authoring op-eds, Commissioners will be critical to spreading the word and building momentum.

- **Prioritizing Our Outreach**: Now that the Commission has finalized its policy recommendations, we are refining our stakeholder mapping through a lens of policy implementation. With the help of RAW, GPE has identified 45 policy bundle areas which we believe will be of vested interest to certain stakeholders. During September and October, GPE will work with OGC to map our stakeholders (old and new) against these policy bundle areas. In order prioritize our stakeholder engagement work, we will analyze each organization on three criteria: (1) their level of interest or passion on the policy bundle and whether they support or oppose; (2) their clout or influence with Congress or other decision-makers, and (3) their current relationship with the Commission. Using this analysis, we will develop customized outreach strategies to advance our goals.
• **Piggybacking on Trending Topics:** We are living in a cluttered media environment, and it's difficult to break through given the drumbeat of coverage about the White House and the presidential campaign. Campaign coverage will be especially strong in March 2020, when 33 states will have primaries including Super Tuesday. One way GPE will try to break through the clutter is to “piggyback” on stories and trends related to service. For example, many thought leaders and elected officials have voiced concern about America becoming an increasingly divided nation. This can be a hook for GPE to pitch a story about how service unites people from different backgrounds.

• **Using Commitments to Build Momentum:** GPE is discussing a potential strategy for the library events of having organizations (agencies, companies, nonprofits) that are aligned with Commission’s recommendations announce new pledges or commitments of resources to expand or enhance service opportunities during our library events. For example, a Governor or State School Superintendent could announce a new civic ed initiative; a group of higher ed institutions could announce they are matching the AmeriCorps Education Award, or a Fortune 500 company could announce their investment in an employee service fellowship. Done well, these commitments can boost buy-in, attract media attention, and strengthen partnerships. The challenge of doing this is limits on our staff time and capacity.

### GPE Lines of Effort

The GPE team is responsible for developing, executing, and coordinating the Commission’s engagement strategy with all external audiences. Given the sweeping nature of the Commission’s mandate and wide diversity of our stakeholders, the GPE team has organized into three main streams of work, each with its own priorities, but fully integrated as a whole.

The **Government Affairs** team is responsible for developing, executing, and coordinating the Commission’s engagement strategy with all levels of government, including Congress, the Executive Branch, and with state and local bodies. The team has also taken a leadership role in reaching out to government associations/organizations and veteran/military support organizations.

Based on the overall GPE goals, the Government Affairs team has three priority goals for the next year:

• **Build support and momentum** for Congressional enactment of the Commission’s legislative recommendations.
• **Cultivate interest and support** from the Administration and federal agencies for the Commission’s recommendations requiring executive branch action.
• **Lay the groundwork for future action** on the Commission’s recommendations after its closure by strengthening relationships and building buy-in with key stakeholders including Congress, federal agencies, state and local government associations, and interest groups.

The **GA team** has three primary lines of effort:

• **Congressional Engagement** focusing on jurisdictional committees, Congressional Caucuses, and individual members who are champions of service initiatives.
• **Federal Agency Engagement** to garner input and feedback on policy recommendations through regular interagency meetings and targeted single agency meetings.
- **State and Local Government Engagement** including meeting with state and local officials and engaging government associations and organizations such as the National Governors Association, National Association of Counties, etc.

The **External Affairs** team is responsible for developing, executing, and coordinating the Commission’s engagement strategy with all levels of non-governmental stakeholders, including nonprofits, foundations, companies, military-service organizations, veteran-service organizations, and institutions of higher education.

The External Affairs team has established three priority goals for the next year:

1. **Build relationships** to gather input, activate stakeholders, and cultivate political buy-in around Commission’s final recommendations.
2. **Raise awareness** of the Commission’s recommendations and how they are aligned with interests of key stakeholders.
3. **Lay the groundwork for future action** on the Commission’s recommendations after its closure by strengthening relationships and building buy-in with key non-governmental stakeholder groups.

The EA team focuses on three primary lines of effort:

- Relationship management and coalition building
- Commission events, meetings, and convenings
- External events and speaking engagements

The **Public Affairs** team is responsible for effectively developing, executing, and coordinating the Commission’s strategic communications and public affairs efforts for individual Commissioners and the Commission as a whole. The PA team has three priority goals for the Commission’s final year:

1. **Raise awareness** of the Commission and its recommendations.
2. **Build momentum and support** for enactment of the Commission’s recommendations.
3. **Amplify the value and importance of service** to help create a culture of service.

The PA team will use a mix of **owned, paid and earned media** to build the Commission’s brand and disseminate the Commission’s recommendations:

- **Owned media**: leveraging channels the Commission creates and controls including social media, videos, blogs, and our website.
- **Earned media**: This includes print, online, radio, television (broadcast and cable) coverage related to the Commission; opinion pieces including op-eds, columns, and editorials; and other forums where the press and the public share content about the Commission and its work.
- **Paid media**: This includes digital ads on platforms such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter to drive traffic to our final report or build attendance at rollout events.

**Audiences**

GPE has refined its goals and strategies around four primary audience groups (in priority order):

- **Congress**: The GPE team has worked to build strong working relationships with key professional staff members on jurisdictional committees, which have the largest stake in the Commission’s recommendations and play the most significant role in advancing any future enacting legislation. We are also engaging with select Congressional Caucuses, which provide an opportunity to convene a significant Congressional audience and a built-in platform for the Commission. Another priority is engaging with “champions” - individual Members of Congress with specific interest in advancing service initiatives.
• **Executive Branch and Administration**: GPE will continue to build relationships with federal agencies, and will identify the best path for delivering and briefing the final report to White House officials.

• **External Partners**: Over the last two years, the Commission has engaged with more than 400 organizations and individuals. As we continue to deepen our existing relationships and build new ones, GPE will activate our partners through policy-focused coalitions. Given the diversity of our stakeholder and policy issues, rather than focus on building one large coalition, we will focus on developing smaller coalitions centered around policy bundle areas.

• **American Public**: Since the formation of the Commission, we have been guided by our mandate which requires us to both listen to and inform the American public. As we begin our final year, we will continue to engage the average American in our conversation through earned and social media, our website, and other tools in order to amplify our recommendations and highlight the value and importance of service.

## Three Phases of Work

As we enter the Commission’s final year, GPE has mapped out three primary phases of work:

- **Phase 1: Engage and Prepare** (September 2019 - Mid-March 2020)
- **Phase 2: Rollout and Roadshow** (Late-March 2020 - End of June 2020)
- **Phase 3: Embed and Handoff** (July - September 2020)

Below is a summary of our priorities, strategy, and tactics within each phase. Please see our full Engagement and Communications Strategy for a more detailed explanation of these phases.

### Phase 1: Engage and Prepare (September 2019 - Mid-March 2020)

**Phase 1 Government Affairs Priorities**

- GPE will continue to facilitate discussions with jurisdictional committees regarding policy recommendations and legislative proposal language.
- We will use meetings with Congressional Caucuses and individual Member offices to build a Congressional community of interest, allowing us to identify potential champions, educate Members on the Commission’s activities and recommendations, and identify areas of opposition to the Commission’s proposals.
- The GPE will continue to vet Commission policy recommendations with key Executive Branch partners and build support for adopting and implementing those recommendations.
- We will also broaden awareness of the Commission’s mandate among non-federal government organizations and government affiliated associations to build support for public service and other recommendations requiring implementation outside of the federal government.

**Phase 1 External Affairs Priorities**

- GPE has started meeting with key stakeholders to update them on the work of the Commission, discuss collaboration opportunities for 2020, and better understand their legislative priorities.
- We will continue to keep stakeholders updated and when appropriate, we will bring some key partners into the planning process for our report release events.
- Overall, our goal during the relationship management and preparation stage is to have a firm grasp on what our key stakeholders think about relevant policy recommendations and have them excited and eager to activate around the release of our final recommendations.
- In order to avoid “going dark” in the fall and to continue to build stakeholder interest, GPE will coordinate an average of 6-8 engagements a month.
**Phase 1 Public Affairs Priorities:**

- GPE will continue to meet with reporters to form and/or strengthen relationships. We will also continue to pitch op-eds and write letters to the editor on topics related to the Commission’s mandate.
- We will continue to leverage key dates such as September 11, the anniversary of the Commission’s establishment, Veterans Day, and MLK Day to build content and momentum for service overall. Each date will have digital amplification and in certain cases an earned media approach as well.
- As a build up to the release of the final report, we will begin creating supplemental materials including talking points, graphics, toolkits, etc. Next month, we will start working on a contract for creation of one or more short videos to use at events and social media.
- Until the public comment deadline on December 31, 2019, we will push the ask of public comments in meetings, engagements, and social media. Upon deadline, the Commission messaging will shift to gearing up for the release of the final report.
- The PA team will work with the External Affairs and Government Affairs teams to keep in touch with stakeholders through speaking roles and engagements, and creating digital assets and district work period toolkits.

**Phase 2: Rollout and Roadshow (Mid-March 2020 - End of June 2020)**

**Phase 2A: Washington DC Rollout Week (Late March)**

In late March of 2020, the Commission will release its final report and recommendations. Given our overarching goal of advancing the recommendations, GPE will execute a robust set of activities during “rollout week” to raise awareness, gain media attention, and cultivate buy-in across Congressional, governmental, and non-governmental stakeholders.

Finalizing the exact date requires consulting the 2020 Congressional calendar, which is not available yet. GPE will propose a date once the calendar is available in November. At this time, the third week of March appears to be the likely rollout week. Within the selected week, the main rollout day will occur mid-week (Tuesday or Wednesday) to maximize Congressional participation.

GPE will execute a series of events and activities around the release of our final report, including:

- **DC Press Conference:** The rollout day would begin with a morning press conference on Capitol Hill targeting national, DC, and Capitol Hill press. The Chair and two Vice Chairs will provide brief remarks, answer questions, and be available for interviews following the event. Given our goal of building bipartisan Congressional buy-in, key Members of Congress will be invited to speak, including Senator Reed and other champions of service.

- **DC Stakeholder Event:** GPE will organize an event geared to our key stakeholders including staff at federal agencies, nonprofits, associations, and other influencers. Similar to the Interim Report release, the event would feature speakers and panel discussions on the recommendations and would be live-streamed and open to the media. Speakers would include Commissioners and potentially several “marquis” validators. The purpose is to share the recommendations, generate interest, build buy-in, and lay groundwork for stakeholder action.
• **Congressional Meetings and Drop-Off:** After the press conference, Commissioners and staff will have pre-arranged meetings with key congressional offices including leadership, jurisdictional committees, champions and others. In addition, staff and volunteers will split into groups to deliver copies of the final report to all congressional offices not having a pre-arranged visit.

• **DC Reception:** The McCain Institute has mentioned the potential of an evening reception or event for Members of Congress, staff, and other key stakeholders on the day of the report rollout.

• **Earned and Digital Media Blitz:** In addition to the press conference, the Public Affairs team has a robust plan for press during rollout week, including working on an embargoed exclusive with a leading outlet to come out just before press conference; embargoed pre-briefings with other reporters, potential National Press Club newsmaker luncheon; extensive pitching of broadcast, print and online reporters; and an op-ed and editorial outreach campaign. There will be extensive digital media efforts by GPE and our stakeholders including Hill champions, federal agency partners, and non-governmental stakeholders, supported by a communications toolkit and other supplementary materials.

• **Stakeholder Briefings:** In addition to the DC stakeholder event, briefings with certain key stakeholder groups or coalitions will be set up for Commissioners and staff to share the recommendations, answer questions, and discuss next steps.

**Phase 2B: Post-Release Roadshow and Campaign (Late March - End of June)**

To continue building awareness and momentum for the Commission’s recommendations after the release, GPE will work on a series of events, engagements, and government affairs and communications strategies between the beginning of April and the end of June.

**Events in Partnerships with Presidential Libraries and McCain Institute:**

In response to the Commission’s guidance and in coordination with Alan, GPE has started outreach with the McCain Institute and is ready to support outreach to contacts at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, George W. Bush Presidential Library, the William J. Clinton Library Presidential Library to plan events after the release of the final report. Each event will focus on a different theme, but they will all amplify the common messaging from the Commission’s report.

Our goals with the Library events are to raise awareness and build momentum for the Commission’s recommendations; earn media attention; engage local government officials and demonstrate high-level bipartisan support from previous presidents and national leaders who took an active interest in service. The participation of former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton and representatives of the Kennedy and McCain families are the keys to success for these events. GPE does not recommend holding a library event without the securing participation of the principal. GPE has arranged a meeting with Chairman Heck, Alan Khazei, and the Executive Director of the McCain Institute on September 18 to discuss potential dates, themes, and speaker ideas. If the Commissioners support this idea, we could explore whether it could be feasible for Presidents Bush and Clinton to join together on stage, either at the McCain Institute event, one of their libraries, or another location.

For the Library events, the PA team will pitch state and local media including wire service reporters, seek out editorial board meetings, and work with the former president’s communications staff to get a video or op-ed from the president highlighting the importance of service.
In addition to these events, each GPE team will carry out other activities to advance our goals, including:

**Phase 2 Government Affairs Priorities**

- **Congressional Briefings**: Briefings with leadership and professional staff from the jurisdictional committees. This will include pre-briefs on HASC & SASC and briefing professional staff right before the release of the report. (March 2020 - April 2020)
- **Congressional Hearings**: Jurisdictional committee and/or subcommittee hearings featuring testimony from Commissioners (likely early April for HASC & SASC).
- **In District Events**: To better engage interested Members of Congress, build relationships with key committee members, and educate possible Congressional champions, the GA team is working to develop a series of District Events in the home districts of key Members of Congress. District Events are designed to be smaller engagements, featuring one to two Commissioners headlining a town hall or roundtable event.

**Phase 2 External Affairs Priorities**

- **Stakeholder Briefings**: In-person briefings (like those following the Interim Report release) for groups of stakeholders; based on the staff’s stakeholder mapping. These will complement the Commission’s aggressive external engagement strategy of leveraging meetings, conferences and convening to promote the report. These will be specialized meetings to ensure all our key stakeholders have a firm understanding of our recommendations. (March 2020 - May 2020)
- **Distribution Campaign**: Distribution of the final report to Congressional offices, executive branch interagency partners, and external key stakeholders. We will also mail public hearing witness a copy of the final report and email a copy to the individuals we met with in 2018 & 2019 during our engagements, public meetings and public hearings. (March 2020 - April 2020)
- **Coalition Activation**: Once the final report is released, we will work closely with stakeholder organizations to help them become informed about all relevant recommendations to their work. We will then partner with them, as appropriate, to raise awareness and build political buy-in. Our goal is to engage partners as both communication ambassadors and policy validators. (March 2020 - June 2020)
- **External Engagements, Events, and Conferences**: After the release of the final report, the number of engagements will kick up. We anticipate doing an average of 10-12 engagements a month involved Commissioners. These engagements will be with a wide variety of stakeholder and audiences to ensure our report and recommendations have wide awareness. Examples include the National Governors Association, the National Service-Learning Conference, Campus Compact, CNAS Annual Conference. (March 2020 - June 2020)

**Phase 2 Public Affairs Priorities**

- **Media Campaign**: A campaign consisting of earned media in Tiers 1,2, and 3 to push the final report and all recommendations. (February 2019 - June 2020).
- **Digital Campaign**: An online campaign utilizing the Commission’s digital platforms including website, social media, newsletter, videos, and more. (March 2020 - June 2020).

**Phase 3: Embed and Handoff** *(July - September 2020)*

**Phase 3 Government Affairs Priorities**
During the wind-down phase, GA will continue to monitor legislative developments and engaging Committee and member staff on specific policy recommendations and legislative proposals.

**Phase 3 External Affairs Priorities**
- Starting in July, we will begin working with the most passionate stakeholders to pass off championing our recommendations. This will entail making sure our stakeholders are informed about where certain pieces of policy stand in terms of being enacted and making sure our stakeholders are well informed on the nuances of our recommendations.

**Phase 3 Public Affairs Priorities**
- Although the Commission is winding down, we still expect media to reach out interested in speaking to the Commission on what is next and if any actions are taken. We will also continue to pitch to media in tiers 1, 2, and 3 as appropriate.
- Leading to the disestablishment of the Commission, PA will execute a “close out” campaign (like that of a White House close out). This campaign will include a plan on how the Commission intends to say goodbye through all digital platforms (last tweet/post, last blog, statement of way forth, accomplishments, etc.).
- There are various approaches we can take with the future of the website (www.inspire2serve.gov). During this time, we will work closely with the entities who will host the final report and any other aspect of our work on their website.