

2020 DC Fly-Back Speaker Profiles

Speaker Bios

Congressman James Comer (KY-1)

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Upon his election to Congress in November 2016, James Comer came to Washington ready to fight on behalf of the people of the 1st Congressional District. He was reelected in 2018.

Congressman Comer grew up in rural Monroe County and later attended Western Kentucky University to study his lifelong passion: Agriculture.

Upon graduation in 1993, he entered the business world, taking out a loan to purchase his first farm and dive into his career. Today that business, Comer Family Farms, is one of the largest farming operations in south central Kentucky.

After his first election in 2000, Congressman Comer served six terms as a member of the Kentucky State House. Upon being elected Kentucky's Commissioner of Agriculture in 2011, he promoted rural economic development by spearheading the successful effort to legalize industrial hemp and developed new branding initiatives for Kentucky farmers. **Committees:** Oversight and Reform (Ranking Member); Education and Labor.



Ambassador Kelly Craft

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

Ambassador Kelly Craft was nominated by President Donald J. Trump to the position of Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations and confirmed by the United States Senate on July 31, 2019. She was formally sworn in on September 10, 2019.

Ambassador Craft served as the United States Ambassador to Canada from October 2017 until assumption of her USUN role in 2019. During her time as Ambassador, she worked through the complex revisiting of the NAFTA treaty, known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement or USMCA.

Ambassador Kelly Craft is a leader, entrepreneur and philanthropist who has made community service and improving education the cornerstone of her career.

As a third-generation Kentuckian, Ambassador Craft served her community by assuming several leadership roles with the Salvation Army of Lexington and the Center for Rural Development, a non-profit dedicated to the economic development of rural Kentucky. She also served in similar roles in the cultural leadership of her state, working with the Kentucky Arts Council and the United Way of the Bluegrass. With a deep commitment to education, Ambassador Craft has served on the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees and co-founded the Morehead State University Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics.

In 2007, President George W. Bush appointed Ambassador Craft as an alternate delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. In the private sector, Craft founded a successful marketing and business advisory firm providing leadership advice to businesses across the country.

Ambassador Craft is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and holds an Honorary Doctorate from Morehead State University. She and her husband, Joe Craft, who is also native Kentuckian, share six children and eleven grandchildren.



William “Ike” White, Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Science overseeing the Office of Environmental Management

Ike White started his role with Environmental Management in June 2019 to provide leadership for the safe cleanup of the environmental legacy brought about from five decades of nuclear weapons development and government-sponsored nuclear energy research.

Prior to this position, he served as the Chief of Staff and Associate Principal Deputy Administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). In this capacity he served as the primary point of contact within the Office of the Administrator for field office managers and provided leadership and coordination on a wide range of complex operational and technical issues at NNSA sites. White also served as a member of NNSA’s executive leadership team, providing advice to the Administrator and Principal Deputy Administrator on programmatic and policy issues.

Previously, White was the Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety and Health. The Office of the Associate Administrator for Safety and Health, which is now part of the Office of Safety, Infrastructure and Operations, enabled the NNSA mission in the areas of nuclear and occupational safety, directly supporting the Administrator and senior managers throughout the NNSA enterprise.

Earlier in his career, White served in a variety of leadership and technical positions in NNSA and at the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board focused on nuclear safety and operations.

White has a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Mississippi and a Master of Science in engineering from the University of California, Berkeley.



Secretary Elaine Chao, U.S. Secretary of Transportation

Secretary Elaine Chao is currently the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. This is her second cabinet position. She served as U.S. Secretary of Labor from 2001 to January 2009, and is the first Asian American woman to be appointed to the President’s cabinet in American history.

Secretary Chao comes to the U.S. Department of Transportation with extensive experience in the transportation sector. Early in her career, she specialized in transportation financing in the private sector. She began her executive career in public service working on transportation issues at the White House. She then served as Deputy Maritime Administrator, U. S. Department of Transportation; Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission; and, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation. As U.S. Secretary of Transportation, she is a strong advocate for safety, and the importance of infrastructure and innovation in our nation’s economic competitiveness and growth.

Secretary Chao has a distinguished career in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. An immigrant who arrived in America at the age of eight speaking no English, she received her citizenship at the age of 19. Her experience transitioning to a new country has motivated her to devote most of her professional life to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to build better lives for themselves and their families. As U.S. Secretary of Labor, she focused on increasing the competitiveness of America’s workforce in a global economy, promoted job training, and set new records in workplace safety and health.

Prior to the Department of Labor, Secretary Chao was President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of America, where she restored public trust and confidence in one of America’s premier institutions of private charitable giving, after it had been tarnished by financial mismanagement and abuse. Secretary Chao also served as Director of the Peace Corps, where she established the first programs in the Baltic nations and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

Secretary Chao earned her MBA from the Harvard Business School and an economics degree from Mount Holyoke College. Honored for her extensive record of accomplishments and public service, she is the recipient of 37 honorary doctorate degrees.

Secretary Chao is a resident of Jefferson County, Kentucky. Prior to her appointment as Secretary of Transportation, she was a Distinguished Fellow at Hudson Institute. She is the eldest of six daughters born to Dr. James S.C. Chao and the late Mrs. Ruth Mulan Chu Chao.



Richard “Dick” Balzano, Deputy Administrator, MARAD

Richard Balzano was appointed by President Donald Trump and sworn in on October 16, 2017, by Secretary Elaine L. Chao as Deputy Maritime Administrator.

A 1989 graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy, Balzano earned his Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering with a minor in Nuclear Engineering. He was commissioned in the U.S. Navy Reserve and also holds a master’s degree in Environmental Sciences from Johns Hopkins University. Prior to his appointment, Balzano served on active duty in the U.S. Navy in various assignments, retiring at the rank of Captain.

Balzano’s active duty assignments include: Sustainment Strategy Lead, Joint Program Office, F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; US Central Command J-3 Operations Liaison to NATO, Operation Resolute Support, Kabul, Afghanistan; Chief of Staff, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L), Office of Small Business Programs; Commander US Naval Forces Central Command, Liaison to the Sultanate of Oman; Platform Commander, Al Basra Iraq; Commander Naval Installations Command, Global War on Terrorism Action Officer; and Military Assistant, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In 2005, Balzano was qualified by the Office of the Director of Ocean Engineering and Supervisor of Salvage and Diving as the US Navy’s first ever Heavy Lift Project Officer in response to the requirement to heavy lift damaged assets much like the operation performed on the USS Cole. Since 2005, he has conducted a number of heavy lift operations worldwide.

In his civilian employment capacity, Balzano has held various positions that include: Senior Staff, US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security; Deputy Test Director, SRS Technologies; Program Manager, Science Application International Corporation; Nuclear Test Engineer and Nuclear Systems Operator, Northeast Utilities; Engineering Officer, Texaco Oil Corporation.



William “Bill” Paape, Associate Administrator for Ports & Waterways

Bill Paape, a member of the Senior Executive Service, became the Associate Administrator for Ports & Waterways on June 7, 2020. In this capacity, Paape directs a national port infrastructure modernization program in excess of \$2 billion – a program that includes BUILD, INFRA, Port Infrastructure Development, and Marine Highway discretionary funds. He is responsible for the continued development of the marine highway initiative and manages the Agency’s offshore energy licensing projects (the Deepwater Port Program).

Previously, Paape served as the Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Ports & Waterways and the Director for the Office of Maritime & Intermodal Outreach. In this role, he managed the Agency’s 10 regional Gateway Offices and was responsible for supporting MARAD’s mission to improve and strengthen the US marine transportation system to meet the economic and security needs of the Nation. Prior to this he was the Inland Waterways Gateway Director for MARAD.

He is a native of Madison Wisconsin and a career U.S. Army Reserve Officer. Paape retired as a Colonel from the Army Reserve in 2012. Paape has a master’s degree in International Relations from Troy State University, a master’s degree in Procurement and Acquisitions Management from Webster University, and a master’s degree in Strategic Studies from the US Army War College.



Chad Dorsey, Director, Inland Waterways Gateway Office, Paducah

Chad Dorsey serves as the Maritime Administration’s Director of the Inland Waterways Gateway Office in Paducah. Prior to this current role, Dorsey has served many roles within the private maritime sector. As a navigation officer, he spent eight years in the merchant marine, visiting over 25 foreign ports of call and delivering food aid through what is currently known as the Food for Peace program. He then transitioned to a shore-side career to serve as the director of operations in one of the nation’s largest dry bulk terminals. During this time, he received a CEO-designated “Bravo Zulu” award for dedication and outstanding efforts during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Dorsey has held various management roles in operations and engineering within the inland industry, including that of senior director of commercial operations and logistics, as well as roles in transportation consulting and business development. He was named to the International Propeller Club Board of Directors in 2015.



Speaker Bios

Winsome Lenfert, Deputy Associate Administrator for Airports, Federal Aviation Administration, DOT

Winsome Lenfert was appointed Deputy Associate Administrator for Airports on February 1, 2017. The mission of the Airports organization is to provide leadership in planning and developing a safe and efficient national airport system.

Each year, the office awards approximately \$3.3 billion in airport grants and approves passenger facility charge collections totaling approximately \$2 billion. The office is also responsible for national airport planning, as well as environmental and social requirements. The office establishes policies related to airport rates and charges, compliance with grant assurances and airport privatization.

Lenfert graduated from Indiana State University with a double major in Professional Pilot Technology and Aviation Administration with a minor in Business Administration and from Indiana University with a Masters in Public Affairs. She began her aviation career working for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) as Chief Airport Inspector.

She began her career with the FAA as an Airport Certification Safety Inspector. Since then she has held many positions with the FAA including Airport Certification/Safety Specialist in Washington, DC; Community Planner for the O'Hare Modernization Program in Chicago, Illinois; Assistant Manager of the Detroit Airport District Office in Detroit, Michigan; and both Manager of Regional Operations and Director for the Airports Division Southern Region in Atlanta, Georgia.



Kirk Shaffer, Associate Administrator for Airports, Federal Aviation Administration, DOT

Kirk Shaffer was reappointed by President Donald Trump and Secretary Elaine Chao as Associate Administrator for Airports in 2018. He served in this role previously between 2007-2009. Shaffer has more than 30 years experience as an entrepreneurial airport executive, advocate, and regulator. He manages an annual budget of \$3.35 billion (which includes an operating budget of about \$112 million), and is responsible for the Airport Improvement Program grants, which total around \$7 billion annually, as well as two major research programs. He is also responsible for overseeing national airport safety and standards, planning, engineering, environmental processing, financial assistance and compliance programs for more than 3,320 public-use airports nationwide. He is the author of the Nation's first Letter of Intent securing a Federal funding commitment for an airport capacity project in advance of appropriations, thus inventing an airport infrastructure finance system, which now yields about \$7 billion in safety, security, and capacity investment annually. He is a veteran of the U.S. Army and is Ranger, airborne, jumpmaster, and air assault qualified. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point; a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin; and a Master of Law degree from The Judge Advocate General's School of the U.S. Army. He is also a private pilot.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell

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Mitch McConnell is the U.S. Senate Majority Leader. Elected to that position unanimously by his Republican colleagues first in 2014 and again in 2016 and 2018, he is only the second Kentuckian to ever serve as Majority Leader in the U.S. Senate. McConnell was first unanimously elected by his colleagues as the Republican Leader in 2006. He is the longest-serving Senate Republican Leader in the history of the United States.

Recently, Senator McConnell introduced and led to passage the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act. The CARES Act was signed into law by President Donald Trump and became the biggest rescue package in history.

He graduated with honors from the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences, where he served as student body president. He also is a graduate of the University of Kentucky College of Law, where he was elected president of the Student Bar Association. Leader McConnell is married to Secretary Elaine L. Chao, the 18th U.S. Secretary of Transportation. **Committees:** Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; Appropriations; and Rules and Administration; Select Committee on Intelligence.



Rebecca L. Noah Casper, Mayor, City of Idaho Falls, Idaho

Rebecca Casper was re-elected to a second term as Mayor of Idaho Falls in a citywide election in November 2017. Idaho Falls is a city of roughly 63,000 located on the banks of Idaho's Snake River. Idaho Falls is the largest city east of Idaho's capitol and it follows the strong mayor model. With six enterprise funds and utilities and an annual budget of approximately \$230 million dollars, Idaho Falls is one of the most complex cities in the state.

Prior to her election, Mayor Casper taught university level courses in American government and state and local governance. She earned her BA and MA degrees from BYU, in Provo, Utah, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from UC-Berkeley. Before that, she worked as a research associate at the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C.

At the state level, Mayor Casper serves as a Director for the Association of Idaho Cities and is a member of Idaho's LINE Commission charged with promoting nuclear energy opportunities for Idaho. She also serves on the Regence Blue Shield of Idaho Board. In 2016 and in 2020, she received the Idaho Business Review's Women of the Year Award.

Nationally, Mayor Casper serves as a Board Director and Officer for the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) advocating for Eastern Idaho's energy and environmental clean-up interests. In 2016, Mayor Casper was selected as a participant in Governing Magazine's Women in Government Leadership Program.



Seth Kirshenberg, Executive Director, Energy Communities Alliance (ECA)

Seth Kirshenberg serves as the Executive Director of the Energy Communities Alliance, the organization of local governments adjacent to DOE facilities and national laboratories.

Kirshenberg is a Vice Chair of the Privatization, Outsourcing and Financing Transactions Committee for the American Bar Association and a Board Member of the Council of Development Finance Agencies.

Kirshenberg has worked on over \$15 billion of public-private transactions. He regularly structures, negotiates, documents and closes large, complex transactions for lenders, developers, federal, state and local government entities. His unique practice requires him to work on all phases of development projects that include public-private partnerships, power purchase agreements, enhanced use leases, student and military housing privatization, energy savings performance contracts, energy development, utilities privatization, and international structured finance.

In the energy arena, Kirshenberg counsels clients on energy efficiency, smart-grid, new battery technology demonstration, smart-house demonstration, photo-voltaic, low-flow turbine generation, small modular reactors, water, wastewater, storm water, energy savings performance contracts and other energy projects. He assists federal, state, municipal and corporate clients to identify and address power purchase agreements, utility agreements, energy tax credit and grant issues and other similar issues.

Kirshenberg regularly speaks at conferences, has served on several federal advisory boards and non-profit policy committees. He has authored and co-authored several books and guides on economic development, brownfields, military base reuse, financing federal energy projects, small modular reactor development, and public private partnerships.



Rick McLeod, Executive Director of the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO)

Rick McLeod is the President/CEO of the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO) and has managed the organization since June 2008. The SRSCRO is a non-profit regional group focused on supporting job creation in a five-county region of South Carolina and Georgia, including Aiken, Allendale and Barnwell counties in South Carolina and Richmond (Augusta) and Columbia counties in Georgia.

In representing the SRSCRO as a unified regional voice, McLeod speaks widely to public groups about issues affecting the Savannah River Site and the region.

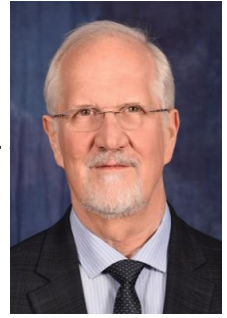


Rick Aman, Ph.D., President, College of Eastern Idaho

Dr. Rick Aman became the inaugural president of College of Eastern Idaho (CEI) in Idaho Falls three years ago. Previously, Dr. Aman was president of Eastern Idaho Technical College, interim vice president of student affairs with Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, and was the vice president of instruction and student affairs with College of Western Idaho in Boise. community college administration career began 20 years ago with various roles at Portland Community College.

Aman earned a PhD in Community College Leadership from Oregon State University, a Masters in Business Administration from Golden Gate University and he is a retired instructor pilot with the Air Force.

Aman's emphasis for growing the college revolves around access, affordability, emphasis on demonstrated skills, speed to degree and the importance of industry recognized certifications and internships for CEI students.



Hilda G. Legg, United States Department of Agriculture, State Director of Kentucky

Hilda Gay Legg was appointed by the Donald J. Trump administration as U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development state director for Kentucky in November 2017. Now serving under her fourth president, Legg brings vast knowledge and a wide variety of skills from experience in public, non-profit and private industries.

Legg started her career as a teacher in Adair County schools before serving in Ronald Reagan's Department of Education. She went on to serve in various capacities focused on rural economic development in the George H.W. Bush and the George W. Bush administrations. She also served as the first executive director and CEO at The Center for Rural Development in Somerset, Kentucky, and she owned a small business assisting community leaders and telecommunications providers with building broadband networks in rural America.

A native of Adair County, Kentucky, where she is co-owner of the family farm, she currently resides in central Kentucky with her husband, Michael, and is the proud mother of a U.S. soldier.



Don Welsh, President & CEO, Destinations International

A seasoned tourism executive with more than 35 years of experience in the industry, Welsh serves as the President and CEO of Destinations International.

Since joining the Association in March 2016, Welsh has implemented a strategic realignment for the association through a renewed commitment to focus on member needs to deliver the resources members have determined to be essential to the success of their organizations.

Prior to joining Destinations International, Welsh served as the President and CEO of Choose Chicago, the official destination organization for Chicago. In this role, Welsh was responsible for marketing Chicago to business and leisure travelers throughout regional, national and international markets. During his five years with Choose Chicago, Welsh developed and implemented initiatives that contributed to stellar results for Chicago's visitor industry. Welsh and his team reported a record-breaking and results driven 2014, including a record of 50.2 million visitors to Chicago resulting in record tourism spending, record hotel tax revenue and jobs; 14 months of record demand for hotel rooms and 13 percent growth in hotel room night production by the Choose Chicago convention sales team.

Welsh also held the CEO position at the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association and the Seattle Convention & Visitors Bureau. Prior to joining the destination organization industry, Welsh served as senior vice president for Westin Hotels at its corporate headquarters, and has also held senior leadership positions in sales and marketing for Westin Hotels and Resorts, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and the MGM Grand Hotel/Casino in Las Vegas.



Tori Emerson Barnes, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs and Policy, U.S. Travel Association

Barnes joined U.S. Travel Association in 2017 to lead its policy outreach efforts. Previously, she had been with General Motors Company, where she most recently served as Executive Director of Federal Affairs. Barnes joined GM in 2003, and managed a portfolio that includes taxes, trade, fuel economy, transportation, health care issues and political operations. Barnes is on the board of the Congressional Women's Softball Game and coaches the Members of Congress team, which plays an annual game against women in the press to raise money and awareness for the Young Survival Coalition, an organization that works with young women facing breast cancer. Barnes graduated from George Mason University.



Robert L. Lynch, President and CEO, Americans for the Arts

Robert Lynch managed the successful merger of the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, where he had spent 12 years as executive director, with the American Council for the Arts to form Americans for the Arts. Under his 33 years of leadership, the services and membership of Americans for the Arts have grown to more than 50 times their original size. Americans for the Arts has become a leader in documenting and articulating the key role played by the nonprofit arts and culture industry, and their audiences, in strengthening our nation's economy including its signature study of the economic impact of the nonprofit arts community, Arts and Economic Prosperity V. He has also been instrumental in creating a strong portfolio of projects and information about the transformative power of the arts in non-arts areas such as civic dialogue, social problem solving and work with the Pentagon, West Point, and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on the arts and military. Lynch earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.



Mary Anne Carter, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

Mary Anne Carter was confirmed as the 12th chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts on August 1, 2019, receiving unanimous consent from the United States Senate. Carter served as acting chairman of the Arts Endowment beginning on June 5, 2018 and following 18 months as the agency's senior deputy chairman.

Since arriving at the agency, Carter has pushed to make the National Endowment for the Arts more accessible to the American people, directing an expansion of Creative

Forces (an arts therapy program for U.S. service members and veterans recovering from post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other psychological health conditions) and bolstering many of its national initiatives, including Shakespeare in American Communities, NEA Big Read, Poetry Out Loud, and the Jazz Masters and National Heritage Fellowships.

To further expand the reach of the Arts Endowment, Carter has held the past several public meetings of the National Council on the Arts at locations outside the agency's offices. These include a June 2018 meeting in Charleston, West Virginia—the first such meeting outside of Washington, DC in 27 years—and in June 2019, in Detroit, Michigan.

Carter brings a unique perspective to the Arts Endowment. Prior to her appointment, she was engaged in public policy analysis, issue tracking, and corporate and campaign communications through her work as a public affairs consultant. During her time at the Arts Endowment, she has demonstrated that lessons learned in her prior professional life are effective tools in directing the work of an agency dependent upon the support and confidence of Congress.

Her knowledge and genuine love for the arts are rooted at the most personal of levels—through the learning differences initially observed in her daughter at age seven. This challenge led Carter to schools that employ the arts as a teaching method in every class, making the learning process both productive and enjoyable for her daughter. Carter understands the power of the arts, as she witnesses that power every day.



Brent Leggs, Executive Director, African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Brent Leggs is the executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Envisioned as a social movement for justice, equity, and reconciliation, the Action Fund is promoting the role of cultural preservation in telling the nation's full history, while also empowering activists, entrepreneurs, artists, and civic leaders to advocate on behalf of African American historic places.

A Harvard University Loeb Fellow and author of *Preserving African American Historic Places*, which is considered the "seminal publication on preserving African American historic sites" by the Smithsonian Institution, Leggs is a national leader in the U.S. preservation movement and the 2018 recipient of the Robert G. Stanton National Preservation Award. His passion for elevating the significance of black culture in American history is visible through his work, which elevates the remarkable stories and places that evoke centuries of black activism, achievement, and community.

Over the past decade, he has developed the Northeast African American Historic Places Outreach Program, and its theme, the Business of Preservation, to build a regional movement of preservation leaders saving important landmarks in African American history. As the project manager for several National Treasure campaigns across the country, he led efforts to create the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument in Alabama, which President Barack Obama designated in January 2017. Other campaign successes include the perpetual protection of cultural monuments like Villa Lewaro, the estate of Madam C. J. Walker in Irvington, New York; Joe Frazier's Gym in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, New Jersey; A. G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham; Nina Simone's birthplace in Tryon, North Carolina; John and Alice Coltrane's home in Huntington, New York; and more.

Leggs is a Paducah native and a graduate of Paducah Tilghman High School. He became the first African American to complete the University of Kentucky's graduate program in historic preservation (part of its School of Architecture). He has taught at Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, and Boston Architectural College, and he is an Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Maryland's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation.



Jon Parrish Peede, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Jon Parrish Peede is Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. His previous positions include publisher of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* (VQR) at the University of Virginia, literature grants director at the National Endowment for the Arts, counselor to NEA Chairman Dana Gioia, director of the NEA Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience program, director of the NEA Big Read program, director of communications at Millsaps College, and editor at Mercer University Press with a focus on the humanities. He has written speeches for a U.S. president, a first lady, and a librarian of Congress.

From 2007 to 2011, Peede oversaw the NEA's funding of literary organizations and fellowships to creative writers and translators. For seven years, he led writing workshops for U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Bahrain, England, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, the Persian Gulf, and on domestic bases.

Under his leadership, VQR expanded its paid readership to 51 countries. He acquired work from seven Pulitzer Prize winners and edited interviews with two Nobel laureates.

He has served on several nonprofit boards, including the national council of the Margaret Walker Center for the Study of the African-American Experience at Jackson State University.

Peede holds a bachelor's degree in English from Vanderbilt University, and a master's in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi.

He is the coeditor of *Inside the Church of Flannery O'Connor: Sacrament, Sacramental, and the Sacred in Her Fiction* (Mercer, 2007) and editor of a bilingual anthology of contemporary American fiction (*Lo que cuenta el vecino: cuentos contemporáneos de los Estados Unidos* [UNUM: Mexico City, 2008].)

