



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION®

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For Immediate Release

February 11, 2026

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National Academy of Public Administration, Bridge Alliance Announce Six High-Profile Winners of “Democracy and Public Service Initiative Fellowships”

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Academy of Public Administration and Bridge Alliance have selected the six proposals that will make up the “Fellows for Democracy and Public Service Initiative,” a key part of **Celebrating the American Public Servant**. These exciting proposals are focused on core areas of study known as key to a healthy democracy.

Bridge Alliance and the National Academy of Public Administration partnered in 2025 to co-create the **Fellows for Democracy and Public Service Initiative**, a step toward integrating institutional wisdom with civic imagination by linking the Academy’s distinguished Fellows with the dynamic, cross-sector ecosystem cultivated by the Bridge Alliance.

“Reform and renewal will be the important themes we highlight in *The Fellows for Democracy and Public Service Initiative*. Our Fellows will produce repeatable action plans and translate research and dialogue into tangible reforms. This program aims to drive results that the American people can feel and see in action,” said **James-Christian Blockwood**, President & CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration.

“These fellows bring extraordinary talent and experience for addressing some central challenges we face as a nation. They are building a leadership infrastructure for the future of American democracy,” said **David Nevins**, founder and board chair of the Bridge Alliance.

Fellows will anchor their work in **six core sectors**, each stewarding a vital component of a thriving democratic republic (full biographies of the fellows are below).

- **Public Service Leadership and Civil Service Reform.** Vince Micone will create “Forging the Next 250: Building America’s Next Public Service Pipeline.” This project will explore how the federal government can build a modern, diverse, and resilient talent pipeline that prepares the next generation of public servants to lead the nation into its next 250 years.
- **Voting and Elections.** Shaniqua Williams will create “The Hidden Infrastructure of Democracy: Professionalizing and Diversifying Election Staff.” This project will focus on strengthening impartiality, transparency, and trust in U.S. election administration by developing an evidence-based framework for training and professionalizing mid-level election staff and expanding pathways that diversify the election workforce.

- **Bridging & Dialogue.** Kristina Becvar will create “From Dialogue to Direction: Rebuilding Shared Civic Purpose in a Fragmented Democracy.” This project seeks to address an increasingly consequential challenge in the bridging community: the lack of shared purpose, coordination, and narrative coherence among those working to strengthen American democracy itself.
- **Electoral Systems Reform.** Beth Hladick will create “The 2026 Primary Problem: Diagnosing the Divide.” The project will use the 2026 midterms to shift the national narrative from “horse race” coverage to structural analysis and rigorously document how partisan primaries disenfranchise voters and fuel polarization.
- **Trustworthy Information Leads to Trust in Government.** Joel Gurin will create “Regaining Public Trust in Federal Data and Information.” The project will explore current obstacles to public trust in data, with a focus on public federal data, and recommend remedies.
- **Pluralism.** Kimberly Walton and Tamara L. Miller will create “Pluralism as a Civic Operating System: Building a Democracy of Dignity.” The project seeks to reframe pluralism as a practical system for navigating demographic, cultural, and increasingly economic and geographic divides.

This partnership between the Bridge Alliance and the Academy reflects our shared commitment to building durable civic infrastructure rooted in collaboration, powered by expertise, and guided by purpose.

About the National Academy of Public Administration

Chartered by Congress to provide nonpartisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent nonprofit organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at www.napawash.org.

About Bridge Alliance Education Fund

Bridge Alliance Education Fund is a catalyst organization empowering a diverse democracy-renewal movement through civic engagement, media innovation, leadership development, and bridge-building across differences.

Fellows’ Biographies

Kristina Becvar consults with organizations working to strengthen democratic governance and civic trust. She advises clients across the democracy ecosystem, including bridging and dialogue, participatory practices, nonpartisan reform, civic engagement and education, governance, and trusted information, bringing expertise in strategy, communications, and research. Previously, she served as Executive Director of the Bridge Alliance Education Fund and co-publisher of *The Fulcrum*, helping align diverse pro-democracy stakeholders and communicate for collective impact. Kristina holds an M.S. in Data Analytics and a B.A. in Business from UMass Amherst.

Joel Gurin is the President and Founder of the Center for Open Data Enterprise (CODE) and author of the book *Open Data Now*. Before launching CODE in January 2015 he served as Chair of the White House Task Force on Smart Disclosure, which studied how open government data can improve consumer markets, and as Chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission. For more than a decade he was Editorial Director and then Executive Vice President of Consumer Reports, where he directed the launch and development of *ConsumerReports.org*, which was then the world’s largest paid-subscription information-based website. He is a graduate of Harvard University with an A.B. in Biochemical Sciences, Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa.

Beth Hladick is the Policy Director at Unite America, where she oversees original and commissioned research that diagnoses the problems with party primaries and evaluates the effectiveness of reform solutions.

In addition to her research portfolio, Beth leads outreach efforts to educate stakeholders on elections and reform. She brings a nonpartisan perspective shaped by her experience at the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Oregon State Legislature, and the U.S. Senate.

Beth also served as a producer on the 2024 film *Majority Rules*, which explores how election systems shape representation and governing incentives. Born and raised in rural Alaska, she holds a bachelor's degree in politics from Willamette University.

Vince Micone is a Professor of Practice in the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University, where he focuses on public management, governance, and leadership. A nationally recognized nonpartisan executive, he previously served as Acting Secretary of Labor and in senior leadership roles across five Cabinet departments, overseeing large-scale operations, workforce systems, and governance reform. Vince is an elected Fellow and Board Member of the National Academy of Public Administration and has led major civic and philanthropic initiatives, including chairing the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area, which raised more than \$800 million for nonprofit organizations. His work bridges government, academia, and civil society to strengthen democratic institutions and public service.

Tamara L. Miller, Esq. is a retired Senior Executive with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and Health & Human Services, a civil rights trial attorney, and a retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel with over four decades of leadership in law, policy, and public service. She is co-founder of SynergyUSA and a partner at MillerMasciola, Attorneys At Law, where she has successfully represented federal and private-sector employees in high-stakes civil rights, whistleblower, and due process matters. Miller previously served as Director of Civil Rights at the Transportation Security Administration and as Deputy Director for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services, leading national enforcement, compliance, and workforce equal opportunity initiatives. Her career bridges democratic governance, civil rights enforcement, and institutional accountability, with a focus on dignity, access, and equal justice.

Kimberly Walton, Esq. is a National Academy of Public Administration Fellow, attorney, and the Founder & CEO of SynergyUSA, a consulting firm focused on strengthening public institutions through inclusive leadership, governance, and workforce strategy. She brings more than two decades of senior executive experience across the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and Commerce, including service as Executive Assistant Administrator at the Transportation Security Administration. A former Presidential Rank Award recipient, Walton currently serves on NAPA's Board of Directors and teaches graduate courses on dignity, belonging, and inclusive leadership at Boston College. Her work sits at the intersection of law, policy, and democratic governance, with a focus on translating values into practical, implementable solutions.

Shaniqua Williams, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at West Virginia University and a Research Fellow with the Center for Election Innovation and Research (CEIR), where her work focuses on election administration, voter registration, and the policies and people that sustain democratic institutions. Her research examines election administration, race and ethnicity, Black women's representation, and state politics, with an emphasis on how institutional design shapes democratic access and participation.

Shaniqua earned her PhD in Public Administration and Public Policy from Auburn University, along with an MPA and a graduate certificate in Election Administration.