



January 5, 2021

Dear Members of the Senior Advisory Committee of the Institute of Politics:

Happy New Year! I hope you all were able to enjoy a good holiday break with your families and friends.

To those who were able to join December's meeting of the SAC, thank you for joining us and for offering your guidance and perspectives on the IOP's plans and priorities. Mark, Amy, and I are glad that you had an opportunity to hear about the IOP's activities during this extraordinary year, meet the new Forum director, see an overview of the IOP's budget, and talk with the remarkable student leaders.

To those who were unable to join us, we missed you greatly. We would be delighted to fill you in on the discussions that occurred, and we hope that you will be able to join us at the next SAC meeting.

To all of you, thank you for your service to the Institute of Politics—and to the Harvard students whom the IOP helps to inspire and guide into politics and public service.

As you know, the Institute of Politics was founded as a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, with the aim of bridging the gap between the academic world and the practical world of politics. The IOP has become one of the largest organizations of the undergraduate students in Harvard College, and it provides robust programming and student leadership opportunities to hundreds of students each year.

From its inception, the Institute of Politics has benefited from the counsel and engagement of an active Senior Advisory Committee. For more than half a century, the IOP's Senior Advisory Committee has included distinguished individuals like yourselves who have served in elected office, public service, and journalism. SAC members' expertise, experience, and worldly connections have brought tremendous benefits to the IOP's students, by guiding programming on campus, developing off-campus internships and job placements, bringing public leaders to campus, helping students understand how politics are evolving in our rapidly changing world, and more.

The IOP was officially established, and Harvard's school of government named the John F. Kennedy School of Government, through a generous gift under an agreement signed by Senator Robert Kennedy in 1966. Since that time, the work of the Senior Advisory Committee has been greatly strengthened by the ongoing close involvement and dedicated leadership of the



Kennedy family, including Jacqueline Kennedy, Senator Edward Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Jr., and Ambassador Caroline Kennedy.

I and my predecessors as dean of Harvard Kennedy School have benefited immensely from our interactions with these members of the Kennedy family and from the extraordinary commitment of time and energy by all of the SAC members over the years. Indeed, the IOP's commitment to practice has influenced the Kennedy School significantly. The founders of the IOP would be very pleased to know that the Kennedy School currently has many faculty members with deep experience in the practical world of government and public service, as well as advisory boards for other parts of the Kennedy School beyond the IOP that include accomplished former senior public officials.

As we look ahead to the next half-century of the Institute of Politics, the time seems right to confirm the governance structure of the IOP and the important role of the Senior Advisory Committee in that structure.

Because of the special mission of the Institute of Politics and the willingness of so many exemplary public servants to join the Senior Advisory Committee, the SAC has played a distinctive and crucial role in guiding the work of the IOP. Continuing that role is crucial to ensuring the future success of the IOP. At the same time, the SAC's role needs to be consistent with Harvard University's practices regarding external advisory groups (as emphasized by Harvard president Drew Faust a decade ago and in continuing discussions). Those practices encourage strong engagement by advisory groups but require that oversight and authority for the University's activities rest with the University—consistent with the University's intellectual independence, fiduciary responsibilities, charitable-gift terms, and need to provide clear lines of authority for staff and students. These guidelines have resulted in successful relationships across Harvard.

Accordingly, the Institute of Politics' Senior Advisory Committee will follow these principles:

- SAC members will meet regularly as a group with the IOP director, executive director, and student leaders, and the HKS dean will join parts of those meetings.
- Between meetings, SAC members will interact primarily with the IOP director and executive director, who can arrange for communication by SAC members with other staff members if needed or requested.



- SAC members will use their experience in politics, governance, and public service to participate actively in discussions of strategic priorities for the IOP, including reviewing existing programs and exploring potential new initiatives.
- SAC members will use their knowledge and connections to identify for the IOP director and executive director potential internships and job placements for students.
- SAC members will use their experience to advise the IOP director and executive director about events that could be held in the Forum (and elsewhere at Harvard) and to help persuade outstanding public leaders to participate in such events.
- SAC members will use their expertise and networks to suggest potential Fellows to the IOP director and executive director and to persuade selected outstanding public leaders to become Fellows.
- By request of the IOP director in consultation with the SAC chair, SAC members may join working groups to offer advice on key programs, such as the National Coalition of Institutes of Politics and Civic Engagement; the working groups will be designed to create increased engagement and idea generation between SAC members, IOP student leaders, and IOP staff.
- By request of the IOP director in consultation with the SAC chair, SAC members may be invited to participate in programs for students to help them understand how politics, government, and public service are evolving.
- SAC members will receive regular updates on the IOP's budget and will be consulted by the IOP director regarding general funding allocations; budgetary decisions will be made by the director in consultation with the HKS dean.
- The SAC chair will be chosen by the HKS dean in consultation with the IOP director and with Caroline Kennedy for the foreseeable future.
- The SAC chair and members will serve terms of three years in length and generally be eligible for an additional term at the invitation of the HKS dean in consultation with the SAC; in extraordinary circumstances, SAC members may be invited to serve further additional terms; and Caroline Kennedy hopefully will serve without specific limit.



- The SAC will have a nominating committee to work with the SAC chair and IOP director to present candidates for the SAC to the HKS dean; the dean will choose and invite new SAC members.
- The IOP director will be chosen by the HKS dean in consultation with the SAC and the Harvard president; the dean will set the terms and salary of the position.
- The IOP director will report to the HKS dean, who will receive input from the SAC in evaluating the performance of the director; the IOP director will be responsible for hiring IOP staff members and for setting their job descriptions and goals, compensation, and other conditions of work.
- SAC members will comply with all Harvard policies, including those regarding conflict of interest, harassment and discrimination, and use of University resources.

I look forward to continuing to work with you, and to working with others who join the Senior Advisory Committee over time, to advance the crucial mission of the Institute of Politics. Through SAC meetings, working group meetings, and other interactions, you will be integral in enhancing the reach of the IOP and ensuring that students benefit from the experience and perspective of distinguished public leaders.

When Senator Robert Kennedy, other members of the Kennedy family, and friends and admirers of President John Kennedy came together to establish the Institute of Politics and name the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, they could hardly have imagined the public challenges that have ensued—and they could hardly have imagined the difference that the IOP has made in the lives of young people who are asking “not what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country.” Harvard students, and the country they are eager to serve, need the IOP as much now as at any point in the past 54 years. We will work together to empower these extraordinary young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug W Elmendorf".