

Dr. Karen Donfried was appointed as Director of the Congressional Research Service in 2024. A noted foreign policy expert, Donfried brings more than three decades of experience leading foreign policymaking, analysis and research with the U.S. Department of State, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the Congressional Research Service.

Most recently, Donfried was a Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Prior to that, she served as the assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, advising the secretary of State, developing and implementing U.S. foreign policy in Europe and Eurasia, promoting U.S. interests in the region, and overseeing State Department operations in more than 50 countries.

Donfried went to the Department of State from the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), where she served for seven years as the organization's first female President starting in 2014. GMF works to strengthen transatlantic cooperation through policy analysis, fellowships for next generation leaders, and support for civil society.

Previously, Donfried served on the National Security Council at the White House, and as the National Intelligence Officer for Europe on the National Intelligence Council. She also worked as part of the Department of State's Policy Planning Staff, and in other roles at GMF, including executive vice president.

For 10 years, Donfried served as an analyst and specialist in European Affairs in the Congressional Research Service's Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division. During her tenure, she wrote hundreds of reports and confidential memoranda on U.S. policy toward Europe, European integration, and transatlantic security.

Donfried earned a bachelor's degree in government and German from Wesleyan University, a Magister from the University of Munich, and a Master of Arts in law and diplomacy and a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.