Riley M. Barnes

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

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Riley M. Barnes is the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) at the U.S. Department of State. In February 2026, Secretary Rubio designated him to serve concurrently as the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. In April 2026, Secretary Rubio also delegated to him the authorities of the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

Before assuming his current role, he held numerous senior positions across the Department of State, including Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for DRL, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, Senior Advisor to the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, senior speechwriter for the Secretary and member of the policy planning staff. Prior to his time at the Department, Mr. Barnes served as senior speechwriter to then-Senate Majority Whip, John Cornyn, of Texas.

Originally from Uvalde, Texas, Mr. Barnes holds a Bachelor's in politics from Washington and Lee University and a Master's in international relations from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.