

Chairman Schiff Opening Statement
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Intelligence Community: An Enduring
Mission Imperative
October 27, 2021

I am pleased to welcome all of you to today's important hearing about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the Intelligence Community. When the Committee held its open World Wide Threats hearing in April, I asked that each of you commit to appear before this Committee in open session to detail your efforts to advance this important mission, and I'm glad to see that commitment fulfilled.

The presence of five senior leaders of the Intelligence Community at this hearing is an encouraging testament to your collective commitment to elevate diversity initiatives - and to ultimately drive real change.

As a longtime member of this Committee, I have seen the emphasis on diversity initiatives in the IC wax and wane. It is not enough to pay lip service to the goal. We must put forth a concrete strategy to build a truly diverse and inclusive IC and hold ourselves accountable to the goals set.

I'm pleased that the Administration has prioritized these issues. Fifteen days after taking office, President Biden issued a National Security Memorandum that acknowledged past shortcomings and identified diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a "national security imperative."

I agree entirely. Put simply, our diversity is our greatest national strength. And it is a strength we need to leverage in support of the mission of the Intelligence Community. For too long, the IC workforce has not reflected the diverse talents and backgrounds found across the country. And without top caliber officers – drawn from all cultures, all communities, and all backgrounds – we risk undermining the capacity of the IC to keep pace with the evolving national security challenges the United States will face in the coming years.

Director Haines, at the World Wide Threats hearing in April, you testified to the increasing complexities and challenges posed by intersecting and cascading national threats -- and the correlating necessity to develop and integrate new and diverse expertise into the Intelligence Community.

Whether it's understanding the nuances in language and culture from a signals intercept, enhancing finished intelligence analysis with unique or nontraditional perspectives, or preparing an officer for operational deployment in a foreign country, it is vital that we bolster the IC's ranks with personnel who can act with agility and creativity in the face of a rapidly shifting strategic threat horizon.

And yet, it is clear we have plenty of work left to do. I remain concerned about inadequate progress in recruiting and retaining individuals of diverse backgrounds in the core IC collection and analysis missions. For instance, I can't help but notice that the large majority of IC briefers, though uniformly excellent, who appear before the committee are white and male.

We need to recruit officers with diverse backgrounds into the IC, and then we need to show them there's a path for them to advance and grow in their careers to top leadership positions. When we're able to successfully do that, we'll inspire future recruits and hires to do the same.

I look forward to hearing your updates on where we are in our diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts, and how this Committee can assist you in accelerating our progress. If resources or authorities are lacking, or if there are other avenues for promoting these initiatives, I know you'll find allies here who are ready and eager to help you.