

# The World Affairs Council of Central Illinois

October 2020 | Issue No. 189

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### 2020-2021 Board of Directors

**Bruce Strom**  
President

**Barbara Lestikow**  
VP Membership and  
Financial Development

**Jolene Vollmer**  
VP Program

**David Scott**  
VP Publicity

**Lynn McMenamin**  
Registrar

**Kathy Hoffmann**  
Secretary

**Nat Seiz**  
Treasurer

**Rochelle Arjmand**

**Richard Berning**

**Adriana Crocker**

**Jonathan Hess**

**Joyce Nardulli**

**Baker Siddiquee**

**Shipra Somani**

**Georgia Winson**

#### IN THIS ISSUE

- WACCI Continues to Meet Via Zoom
- Program Information
- Save the Date
- TikTok is Not a Nursery Rhyme
- Membership Form

### WACCI Continues to Meet Via Zoom

Success! WACCI's first effort at a Zoom program exceeded expectations for interest and attendance. The Board of Directors has announced another Zoom presentation for Thursday, October 15, at 7:00 p.m. See information below on the speaker, Jeffrey DeLaurentis.

If you haven't used Zoom before, follow these simple steps: first, go to the Zoom website, <https://zoom.us> to download the Zoom app onto your computer, notepad, or phone; simply click on "sign up—it's free." Then, on the day of the program, log into Zoom about ten minutes before 7:00 p.m., click on "join a meeting," and enter the Meeting ID 984 7811 6894 and the Password 563951. You may be in a "waiting room" for a few minutes and then will be able to join the meeting. The Zoom meeting can also be accessed by mobile phone at 312-626-6799 and entering the Meeting ID and Password.

If you have issues during the WACCI live presentation, you may call UIS ITS at 217-206-6000 for assistance. Zoom Log-In Information is also available on the WACCI website and Facebook page. All presentations will be recorded and available 2-3 days later.

**Thursday, October 15, 2020 at 7:00 pm via Zoom**  
**Speaker: Ambassador (ret.) Jeffrey DeLaurentis**

### Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities for U.S.-Cuban Relations

On July 20, 2015, a little more than five years ago, the United States and Cuba re-established diplomatic relations after more than 55 years of acrimony. It was a victory for diplomacy, sanity and American interests and values, hailed throughout the region and the world. It did not last long. Today, government to government communication is minimal, with a cascade of new sanctions and harsh rhetoric from Washington. Career diplomat Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis was dispatched to Cuba in 2014 to build a new embassy and relationship and rode the diplomatic roller coaster until mid-2017 when a new American administration dramatically changed course. What happened and why? DeLaurentis has a lot to say about the challenges of forging a new beginning with



Cuba in the best interest of the United States, about what worked and what did not, and about those who question the merits of sustaining such a relationship. He will explore why we need to rebuild the relationship through diplomacy, dialogue and principled disagreement.

*continued on page 2*

## Institutional and Corporate Contributors

### Partner:



### Educational Collaborators:

University of Illinois, Springfield  
Lincoln Land Community College  
SIU School of Medicine



## Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities for U.S.- Cuban Relations *continued*

Ambassador (ret.) Jeffrey DeLaurentis is a Distinguished Resident Fellow in Latin American Studies, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, and Senior Adviser, Albright Stonebridge Group.

During his 28-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service, Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis worked almost exclusively on Western Hemisphere issues and as a multilateral diplomat at the United Nations. He served as the first Charge d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Havana following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, and as a principal negotiator for the many agreements concluded and dialogues launched between the two countries until January 2017. Prior to taking up his Cuba post in August 2014, he was the Ambassador for Special Political Affairs at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Previously, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere.

DeLaurentis, a graduate of the Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, is a recipient of multiple State Department awards. He began his State Department career in 1991 as a consular officer in Havana and returned to Cuba as Political-Economic Section Chief in 1999-2002. In Washington, DeLaurentis served as the Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Director of Inter-American Affairs at the National Security Council. His last assignment in the Foreign Service was at the Harvard Kennedy School as a Senior Diplomatic Fellow. He recently completed a fellowship at Columbia University and is a non-resident Visiting Fellow at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Cuba Studies Program.

## TikTok Is Not a Nursery Rhyme By WACCI Member Roy Wehrle

TikTok, created in China, has achieved meteoric success in attracting viewers to its short videos of persons performing entertaining acts. It has from 30 to 90 million users every month in 200 countries and is valued at \$200 billion based on its Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is so advanced that by analyzing which videos attract audiences (the data set), its computers can predict which videos will pull in viewers. Concern for security of user data led our government to demand that China sell its American TikTok service to a US firm, or be banned.

The capability of AI has been growing rapidly for many years, just waiting until computers got powerful enough to handle gazillions of data and until computing costs of big data became affordable. That time has arrived. A key component of AI today is Deep Learning, the ability of computers to assimilate so much knowledge and data that they can "think" for themselves. A recent example was to feed all the chess moves for thousands of games into a big computer. The computer "learns" for itself what the rules are from all the patterns of play in the

big data. Then it is ready to play chess and is plenty smart, having gorged on the successes and failures of all those moves.

Because the AI behind TikTok is so advanced, it can soak up personal data from its users, and President Trump says this represents a national security risk to the US because the Chinese government could easily obtain these data. So, the US government gave China an ultimatum to sell its American operation to a US company or be banned from our shores. China has responded: the AI of TikTok is a Chinese treasure and cannot be included in any sale of TikTok to America—which makes TikTok of much less value to a bidder. Shortly before the September 20 deadline for decision-making, TikTok's parent company rejected a bid from Microsoft and accepted a bid from Oracle, which was joined by Walmart. Terms of the deal are subject to security review and approval by the White House. One can expect continued shifting in American-Chinese relations. Stay tuned.

---

**Editor's Note:** *The popular video-sharing app TikTok, well known to our children and grandchildren, has been appearing in recent headlines. WACCI member Roy Wehrle, a founder of WACCI, gives us some background for the international controversy over TikTok and the sophisticated science that makes the app valuable.*

---

## WACCI Membership Form

WACCI membership is open to individuals and household members. The recommended time for the payment of annual membership renewals is September, the beginning of the program year (September through May). New members joining in the spring (April through June) will have their membership extended to the June following the current one.

WACCI membership is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

WACCI members will be mailed the newsletter, *Communiqué*. If you also desire the email version of the newsletter, please check here:

Please email the WACCI *Communiqué* to me.

Please indicate your membership level:

Benefactors - \$500  Sustainers - \$250  Supporters - \$100

Friends - \$50  Students - \$10

At all membership levels, your name will be listed periodically in the *Communiqué*.

I would like to become a board member in the future

I would like to serve on a committee

**Be sure to include your email address. Mail the form to WACCI, Box 2233, Springfield, IL, 62705, with a check payable to WACCI.**

----- Please detach and mail -----

### Time to Renew Your WACCI Membership

As fall comes around, so does the time to renew your membership in the World Affairs Council of Central Illinois. Many thanks to those of you who have already paid! We look forward to the continuing participation of others who have supported WACCI in the past.

Your financial support makes possible, for example, the travel and honorarium expenses for speakers, and for other expenses that together make possible the eight programs from September to May and for the Great Decisions six-week seminar offered in the spring.

At all levels, the names of members will be listed periodically in the *Communique*. The next list will appear in the November/December issue of the newsletter.

On this page is a Membership Form. Please be sure to include your email address.

Mail the form to WACCI, Box 2233, Springfield, IL 62705, with a check payable to WACCI.

### Save the Date!

#### NOVEMBER

**Monday, November 9th at 7pm**

Dr. Rachel Havrelock, University of Chicago

“Water Diplomacy in the Middle East”

This presentation is in collaboration with the UIS ECCE Series.

#### DECEMBER

**Thursday, December 3rd at 7pm**

Dr. Megan Styles, University of Illinois Springfield

“Roses from Kenya: Labor, Environment, and the Global

Trade in Cut Flowers”



P.O. Box 2233  
Springfield, IL 62705

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Springfield, IL  
Permit No. 443

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Your international  
connection begins with  
**[www.mywacci.org](http://www.mywacci.org)**



## Save the Date!

### NOVEMBER

**Monday, November 9th at 7pm**

Dr. Rachel Havrelock, University of  
Chicago

"Water Diplomacy in the Middle East"

This presentation is in collaboration  
with the UIS ECCE Series.

### DECEMBER

**Thursday, December 3rd at 7pm**

Dr. Megan Styles, University of Illinois  
Springfield

"Roses from Kenya: Labor, Environ-  
ment, and the Global Trade in Cut  
Flowers"

A promotional banner for the radio show "HEAR, HERE." The background is a black and white photograph of a person wearing glasses and driving a car, with their hands on the steering wheel. The text "HEAR, HERE." is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the center. Below it, the text "Listen every morning" is written in a smaller, white font. In the bottom left corner, the "morning edition" logo is displayed in white. In the bottom right corner, the "npr Illinois 91.9 UIS" logo is displayed in white.