



**May 29, 2026**

Welcome to the May edition of CIEE's Government Affairs and Advocacy newsletter. May brought several exciting developments, including CIEE's 79th birthday on May 8, the naming of the first cohort of Rick A. Ruth BridgeUSA Summer Work Travel Fellows, and the start of CIEE's Community Impact Initiative with America250's America Gives.

### **Inaugural Rick A. Ruth BridgeUSA Summer Work Travel Scholarship Awarded**

On May 11, CIEE announced the inaugural class of ten university students from global Muslim communities who were selected to receive the Rick A. Ruth BridgeUSA Summer Work Travel Scholarship. CIEE selected the 2026 Ruth Fellows for their demonstrated commitment to civic engagement, cross-cultural exchange, and fostering goodwill between the United States and their home countries.

The Scholarship honors career public servant Rick A. Ruth, a longtime senior advisor at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). This new scholarship pays tribute to Ruth's 40-year career of championing public diplomacy and people-to-people exchange programs, with a particular focus on strengthening ties between the United States and the Muslim world.

Learn more about the Ruth Scholarship and Fellows [here](#).

### **New Bipartisan Congressional International Exchange Caucus**

Launched on May 13, the new Congressional International Exchange Caucus was created to strengthen support for international exchange programs, mainly those administered by ECA. The caucus was launched by U.S. Senators Cory Booker (New Jersey) and John Boozman (Arkansas), and U.S. Representatives Jeff Van Drew (New Jersey) and Ami Bera (California).

We look forward to working with this caucus to advance international exchange programs, policies, and investments, and to underscore the importance of BridgeUSA.

### **J-1 Visa Appointment Availability**

CIEE remains concerned about the ongoing reduction in J-1 visa appointments at embassies

and consulates. We have asked hosts to make their congressional members aware of the issue, and we are urging Congress to encourage the U.S. Department of State to: increase embassy and consulate staffing, provide additional operational resources where needed, re-prioritize J-1 visa appointments, and facilitate visa processing for BridgeUSA participants.

We know that a significant reduction in BridgeUSA participation will have a negative impact on businesses, local communities, guest services, and tourism, especially as this summer's FIFA World Cup events and America's 250th celebrations approach. CIEE will continue to discuss this issue with the U.S. Department of State and congressional leaders.

### **Proposed "Duration of Status" Final Rule**

On May 5, the Department of Homeland Security submitted for review, to the Office of Management and Budget, a final "duration of status" rule change. If approved, the rule would create a fixed period of stay for nonimmigrant J, F, and I visa holders. The fixed period would equal the length of the program plus 30 days or a four-year maximum period of admission, depending on the program.

CIEE understands that this proposed rule change would have a significant impact on Research Scholar program participants and university students and would require careful planning when filing an extension of stay. The proposed rule also reflects the Administration's continued focus on reducing overstay rates and addressing unauthorized stays.

Our team will monitor this proposed rule as it moves through the rulemaking process, and we will work with ECA as more information becomes available.

### **CIEE's Community Impact Initiative and America Gives!**

In April, CIEE announced its supporting partnership with America250, the national nonpartisan organization charged by Congress to lead celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

CIEE also is embracing the America250 America Gives initiative, which encourages organizations to deepen their commitment to community service. America Gives aligns closely with CIEE's Community Impact Initiative, adding meaningful, locally grounded community service to all of CIEE's international exchange and study abroad programs. In fact, from March to April, CIEE's program participants and staff logged more than 5,000 hours of community service in the U.S. and around the world.

Track our efforts on LinkedIn and our new CIEE and America250 Partner webpage.

### **BridgeUSA Best Practices and Community Connections**

Learn more about BridgeUSA best practices and connect with the global BridgeUSA community by getting involved with the Coalition for American Public Diplomacy and Leadership (CAPDL)!

- Check out CAPDL's May episode of "The Truth with Rick Ruth", which reflects on how America's openness to BridgeUSA participants strengthens U.S. global leadership, international relationships, and long-term competitiveness.
- Become a CAPDL member to take part in best practices webinars, support the CAPDL Scholarship Fund, and join CAPDL members for the next in-person workshop in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

As always, thank you for your support of the BridgeUSA program through placements, by creating connective on-site cultural programming, and with your outreach to Congressional members. For questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to your CIEE point of contact.

Questions? Contact Asenith Dixon Bell.

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