

# ABIGAIL A. SHENKLE

Homeland security policy leader with 10 years' experience in positions of successively greater responsibility. Team player who excels in assembling, motivating and directing teams of senior professionals containing diverse skill sets, expertise, and needs to achieve broad policy and political objectives under tight and competing deadlines. Experience closely supporting senior principals to identify, communicate and advance key objectives. Deep knowledge of the U.S. Senate and legislative process; experienced communicator and negotiator on oversight, legislation, and confirmations priorities in the DHS mission space. Strong political and management skills prioritizing open communication and a collaborative and proactive approach to advance priorities. Active TS / SCI clearance.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Department of Homeland Security Office of Legislative Affairs

#### ***Deputy Assistant Secretary — Senate (Acting)***

*January 2022 - Present*

Develop, advise the Secretary, and execute negotiating strategy to advance and confirm remaining DHS nominees. Serve as a key member of leadership team to effectively manage OLA personnel and resources to respond to Hill inquiries and staff rollouts, and to advance overarching DHS legislative and oversight priorities. Liaise with legislative colleagues in the White House, National Security Council, and interagency on Hill strategy for hot button issues, including Title 42 and mass migration, FY2023 budget, January 6<sup>th</sup> oversight, Operation Allies Welcome, and law enforcement transparency and accountability (incl. inquiries relating to I&A, classification, CBP use of force, and broad search and seizure authorities). Negotiate dates, topics, and witnesses and lead preparations for Senate hearings with DHS witnesses. Staff the Secretary in legislative engagements and meetings with Committee members, and on travel.

Simultaneously continue to carry out functions of Director for Senate Affairs role (see below).

#### ***Director, Senate Affairs***

*February 2021 - January 2022*

Serve as "chief of staff" for Senate confirmations, working directly below the DAS to manage senior career and political staff within OLA to move 9 DHS nominees successfully through confirmation. Work closely with Oversight and Investigations team, OGC, the Secretary's office, components, other Department personnel, and White House OLA to identify and address obstacles to nominees' advancement in a timely manner. Maintain close working relationships with Senate committees of jurisdiction, OLA and DHS staff, the White House, and nominees to respond to Committee questionnaires, prepare for and staff Member and staff meetings and hearings, respond to questions for the record, and otherwise advance nominees to floor consideration on tight and competing deadlines. Lead moots, hearing preps, briefings, and meeting preps with SMEs and OLA team members to ensure nominee familiarity with Committee priorities and satisfactory responses. Led complex negotiations with multiple Committees over the course of several months relating to CBP use of force and internal accountability mechanisms, ultimately securing bipartisan support and confirmation of nominee for CBP Commissioner in 50/50 Senate.

Consistently develop quick understanding of dense and complex issues facing DHS components in the law enforcement, trade, intelligence, emergency management, immigration, and DHS policy spaces to provide political advice and hearing and oversight strategy while protecting Departmental equities. Draft hearing and QFR responses to advance Administration policy objectives while highlighting nominees' experience, qualifications, and vision if confirmed. Develop multifaceted understandings of complex policy issues to anticipate oversight issues with the potential to slow confirmation processes; work closely with counsel and component leadership to address oversight holds on tight deadlines.

Support efforts of the Senate DAS in negotiations and preparations for hearings, markups, legislation, and confirmations. Draft, edit, and produce Secretary-level memos and emails in support of hearings and Senate member engagements, including phone calls and meetings. Serve as Acting Director for Oversight from September 2021 to February 2022, building coalitions within the Department to address ad hoc and ongoing problem sets relating to use of force, transparency and accountability, border management, and intelligence.

Maintain working relationships at the Component level and in Congress to effectively assist in achieving broad OLA / Department goals. Build and maintain relationships with Component leadership to support broad OLA work where needed, including Senate notifications and policy messaging. Maintain close working relationships with relevant Senate committee and Member staff in order to quickly obtain information for decisionmakers and principals. Stay apprised of policy and legislative developments within and outside DHS that could impact OLA work.

### U.S. Senator Thomas R. Carper

#### ***Senior Policy Advisor***

*January 2019 - February 2021*

Led oversight and legislative strategy in the areas of homeland security, immigration, and DHS oversight. Led, supervised and directed all activities in the areas of defense and foreign policy. Led hearing strategy for 27 hearings, 7 business meetings, 9 nominees, and two roundtables in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Successfully designed and pitched expanded structure for homeland security / governmental affairs team in order to improve oversight and HSGAC coverage; trained and supervised resulting hires.

Directed and supervised a team responsible for producing vote and co-sponsorship recommendations; drafting legislation, amendments, floor statements, and press releases; and preparing and staffing the Senator for hearings, markups, and meetings. Effectively delegated in order to

achieve the Senator's priorities and meet tight and shifting deadlines. Led vetting and staffing for consideration of all national security officials including Cabinet nominees. Directed and supervised legislative correspondents and staff for appropriations, drafting and negotiating legislative text, and staffing meetings with interest groups, State officials, and foreign emissaries on a variety of topics.

Worked closely with state staff and appropriations team to advocate for support for military assets in Delaware, including Dover Air Force Base, Coast Guard, and DE Air National Guard. Worked closely with appropriations and Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff to conduct oversight of U.S. policy toward Central America. Hired, supervised, and directed activities of senior national security professionals serving as defense fellows.

Areas of legislative and policy expertise: foreign policy, defense, and homeland security and DHS oversight topics including immigration policy, COVID-19 response, domestic threat streams, critical infrastructure protection, election security, cybersecurity, Departmental management and succession, border security and migration, oversight of federal law enforcement, and various investigations initiated by the Chairman.

Trusted team player responsible for mentoring and coaching junior staff. Coordinated with PSI staff in briefing, preparing, and staffing the Senator for markups, hearings, relating to investigations initiated by the Chairman. Frequently volunteered for additional responsibilities, including assisting senior leadership and responsible staff to develop priorities, advocating within the caucus, and advising the Senator on diversity issues.

Key achievements:

- P.L. 116-150, reauthorizing the Chemical Facilities Anti-Terrorism Standards, enacted July 2020.
- Successfully advocated for funding to Central America above the President's request 2016-2021.
- Planned, organized and staffed a five-member CODEL to Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, spanning 30+ meetings and events, including with all three heads of state.
- Successfully passed several amendments out of HSGAC, including one requiring notification to Congress of the appointment of an Acting Secretary of Homeland Security using Title 6 authorities.

### **Legislative Assistant**

*January 2017 - January 2019*

Led oversight and legislative strategy on immigration, homeland security, foreign policy, and defense. Lead staffer on 26 legislative and nominee hearings and two roundtables. Lead hiring and training of DOD fellows (senior national security professionals); assign, supervise, and edit work. Supervise and direct activities of legislative correspondent for homeland security and immigration.

Led vetting, interviews, and hearing strategy for all national security nominees, including Cabinet-level nominees for State, DHS, DOD, DNI, and CIA, as well as all Senate-confirmed roles within DHS. Actively participated in meetings between the Senator and senior principals, including Cabinet nominees, agency heads, and appropriations leaders in the House and Senate to advocate for funding, legislative, and policy priorities of the Senator. Worked closely with the press team, LD, and state staff to craft speeches, floor statements, op-eds, and social media posts highlighting the Senator's actions. Worked closely with judiciary staff, and directing the activities of DOD fellow, to advise and brief the Senator on the ongoing investigation into Russian interference, and various subsequent attempts by Trump administration officials to obstruct justice in the investigation.

Developed a cohesive legislative and communications strategy to position the Senator firmly in opposition to Trump executive orders, including executive actions relating to Dreamers, the "Muslim ban," family separation, and curbs on asylum. Coordinated with fellow staff of moderate Democratic members on legislation and oversight activities relating to immigration policy.

Started (and continue to lead) a weekly informal group of moderate staff within the caucus to develop messaging strategy, communicate with leadership, and maintain cohesion on Committee and floor votes. Developed and carried out outreach strategy to immigrant community, including in-person events, in Delaware to highlight impacts of Trump administration's harmful policies, build relationships as a new immigration staffer, and ensure cohesion with subcommittee activities.

**HSGAC Wins.** Worked with Ranking Member McCaskill's staff to secure briefings and hearings on cybersecurity issues, including EINSTEIN implementation and liability concerns. Worked with staff of Democratic committee members to successfully push for a series of hearings on FEMA response to Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey. Led a successful effort across staff of Democratic committee members to demand additional hearings and QFRs regarding confirmation of Kirstjen Nielsen. Successfully led an effort among senior moderate Democratic members requesting appropriators pause additional funds for Border Patrol agents, border wall, or detention beds, representing a shift in their positions.

- Led a series of oversight letters to Treasury and DOD relating to Iran sanctions (2017). Drafted and secured Senate approval of a resolution expressing condolences to terror victims in Iran despite strong initial objections from leadership S.Res. 188, 2017.
- Key legislation with direct involvement (introduced in Senate by Senator Carper, Leader Schumer, and other Ranking Members): Central America Reform and Enforcement Act, S. 3540, to authorize aid funding to the Northern Triangle.
- Worked closely with DHS, stakeholders, Ranking Member McCaskill and House Homeland staff to ensure Chairman Johnson's attempt to end the CFATS program was unsuccessful. Staffed negotiations and floor debate that led to extension of the program.

### **United States Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee**

#### **Professional Staff Member**

*May 2015 - January 2017*

Advised Committee Ranking Member U.S. Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) on a broad range of homeland security issues, including as the lead staffer on chemical facility security, aviation security, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) oversight, and critical infrastructure protection. Staffed the Senator at hearings and in meetings and briefed on breaking homeland security and legislative developments. Directed activities of junior staff to prepare for hearings, meetings, and markups.

Worked closely with committees with DHS jurisdiction, including SSCI, Commerce, Judiciary, and House T&I and Homeland, in support of HSGAC minority legislative objectives. Conducted oversight of CIO agencies' implementation of cybersecurity legislation, including EINSTEIN and CDM. Lead staffer for Ranking Member Carper on Chairman Johnson priorities including EMP and UAVs. Supported efforts to codify and rename the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

- Worked with former TSA Administrator Neffenger to build a coalition in the Senate to support needed TSA reforms in May 2016.
- Lead author of a provision passed as part of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act to bolster effective use of TSA resources in the wake of a bombing at the Brussels airport (Subtitle F of P.L. 114-90; signed into law July 15, 2016).
- Lead minority author of a HSGAC report examining interagency activities to secure airspace over Washington, D.C., issued August 2015.

### **Legislative Aide**

*March 2014 - May 2015*

Lead minority staffer on major legislation reforming and reauthorizing chemical facility security program through Committee markup and passage in the Senate and House (P.L. 113-254; signed into law December 18, 2014). Led extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure passage. Drafted, edited, and negotiated report language with minority Republican staff, House counterparts, and DHS infrastructure protection officials.

- Lead staffer responsible for tracking Department of Homeland Security budget and appropriations processes. Drafted correspondence to and communicated with Appropriations staff in support of the Ranking Member's homeland security priorities.
- Prepared the Senator for hearings, roundtables, and press conferences. Drafted report language for noncontroversial legislation.

### **Research Assistant**

*March 2014 - September 2015*

- Produced joint press conference highlighting a GAO report on improper prescribing of psychotropic medications to youth in foster care.
- Assisted in conducting an investigation, including interviews with 30+ federal agencies and stakeholders, into the rise and use of virtual currencies. Drafted and edited statements, letters, and press materials calling for and responding to actions by federal agencies relating to virtual currencies, including requesting and releasing a GAO report which led the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to issue a consumer advisory. Supervised and directed activities of interns assisting with virtual currency investigation and policy work.

### **Legislative Intern**

*September 2013 - March 2014*

## **New Castle County Chamber of Commerce, New Castle, Delaware**

### **Program Manager, Business and Economic Development**

*January 2012 - August 2013*

Managed and supported economic development and governmental affairs initiatives and supported activities of small business incubator housed on-site. Secured speakers and produced and distributed marketing materials for business education program series events for Chamber members. Managed events, including check-ins and follow-up surveys. Developed and implemented successful social media strategy.

- Implemented a multi-year improvement plan to tailor business education offerings and marketing to Chamber members, which led to 130% increases in attendance and revenue and improved attendee satisfaction while reducing total events from 35 to 32.
- Pitched, developed and implemented comprehensive social media strategy. Increased Twitter following tenfold in 16 months, and increased Facebook engagement and reach fourfold over same time frame.
- Supervised and directed two Master's-level interns working with GIS software to develop mapping functions in support of Chamber economic development activities across the county.

### **Project Specialist**

*August 2010 - December 2012*

- Performed administrative tasks in support of the Economic Development Council, a public-private partnership. Planned and managed business education programming (30+ events per year).
- Launched and managed the Chamber's Young Professionals Network (YPN), generating an additional revenue stream for the organization. Grew group from 0 to 30 paying and active members in the first year and held 6 events.

### **Voter Protection Volunteer, Montanans for Bullock**

*October / November 2020*

### **President, Clydesdale Cooperative Inc.**

*May 2019 - August 2020*

- Led volunteer cooperative board for 51-unit building. Oversaw building management company, communicated with shareholders, renters, attorney and building management company to resolve conflicts and ensure compliance with governing documents, drafted and passed amendments to rules and regulations. Proposed and implemented solutions to numerous sensitive matters requiring Board attention. Implemented virtual board meetings and Annual Meeting in response to COVID-19.
- Completed successful \$100,000 lobby renovation project, including evaluating proposals, seeking shareholder input on design, and communicating process to building.

## **EDUCATION**

**Master's in Public Policy** · ██████████

American University · Washington, DC

**B.A., Economics** · ██████████

University of Delaware · Newark, DE

