

Elizabeth (Betsy) Bennion

Education

UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, CA Juris Doctor <i>Order of the Coif</i> International law award	2002-2005
University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT Master of Arts in United States History Thesis on U.S. Colonies in Mexico Awarded teaching fellowship in U.S. history	1999-2001
Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA Master of Arts in Education Taught English and humanities courses	1996-1997
Brigham Young University, Provo, UT Bachelor of Arts in Honors English with Minor in History <i>summa cum laude</i>	1990-1993/1995-1996

Current Position

Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS), BYU Law School, Provo, Utah	2025-Current
The ICLRS promotes religious freedom for all people, everywhere. In my current role, I help oversee the Center's efforts in the Latin American and Caribbean regions.	

Diplomatic Experience with U.S. State Department

Note: I was continuously employed by the U.S. State Department from June 2015 to September 2025, rotating through the following positions.

Political Officer, U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan	2024-2025
Reported to the U.S. government on Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, Iran, and the Middle East. Served as backup on Pakistan's relations with India. Cultivated contacts in government, business, civil society, and the diplomatic corps to advocate for U.S. policy and provide recommendations to U.S. leadership in support of foreign policy goals. Oversaw high-level visits, such as the congressionally appointed Afghanistan War Commission. Co-led reporting during the Pakistan-India 2025 crisis to keep Washington apprised in real time of a situation dangerously escalating between rival nuclear powers. This included overseeing coordination of input from a 100-plus member team serving in shifts on a 24/7 temporary task force. Some of my reports on Pakistan's relations with India, Afghanistan, and Iran were among the select few delivered directly to the Secretary of State for his daily briefings.	

Executive and Political Officer, U.S. Mission to NATO, Brussels, Belgium **2021-2024**

This was a particularly intense and critical period at NATO, due to two major global crises—Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban. Both occurred when I was working directly with the U.S. Mission’s top leadership in a role similar to a Chief of Staff. I coordinated with the 200-plus member mission to ensure leadership was briefed on all substantive issues in preparation for their meetings and events, participated in strategy meetings with senior staff, and redesigned mission processes to increase efficiency. When I rotated to the political section the second and third years of my tour, I negotiated for the United States among our 31 other NATO Allies for U.S. positions on issues such as China’s security threats to the Alliance, cooperation with Indo Pacific partners, and support for Ukraine’s defense. Reported to Washington on those issues and made policy recommendations. Developed relationships and built coalitions among Allies to serve U.S. interests. Led U.S. team on coordination and strategy for more than 70 U.S. policy deliverables for the Washington NATO Summit.

Norway Desk Officer, Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic Affairs Office, Washington, D.C **2019-2021**

Managed all aspects of the U.S. relationship with Norway, including advising the State Department’s most senior leaders on Norwegian domestic political developments, security and defense matters, consular issues, human rights, justice issues, and government responses to U.S. policy initiatives. Personally briefed the Secretary of State on those issues multiple times. Identified areas for increased cooperation in line with U.S. interests. Maintained strong relationships with counterparts in the Norwegian Embassy in Washington D.C. and the U.S. Embassy in Oslo. Also covered Iceland during a four-month hiring gap and was the backup desk officer for Sweden and Finland.

Watch Officer, State Department Operations Center, Washington, D.C. **2018-2019**

The Operations Center or “Ops” is the State Department’s equivalent of a 911 crisis center, as well as the hub for keeping constant watch on all major developments around the globe, connecting the Secretary of State with world leaders, and ensuring the State Department’s top leaders are constantly well informed on breaking events. As a watch officer, I served on rotating shifts for 24/7 coverage, alerted and briefed senior State Department and interagency officials (both orally and in writing) on fast-changing situations, monitored global developments, and facilitated communication among senior leadership and world leaders. The job required composure under pressure, excellent communication skills, quick decision making, strong judgment, seamless teamwork, and the ability to improvise.

Political and Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy Mexico City, Mexico **2016-2018**

Monitored and reported on political violence and other security issues in Mexico. Composed speeches for the Ambassador, served as her control officer at the 47th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), conducted investigations regarding weapons transactions, and cultivated relationships with government officials and civil society. Supported high-level visits, including leading the team planning for the visit of a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. During my year in the consular office, I interviewed non-immigrant visa applicants in Spanish, created a speed training program, and led the diplomatic visas team.

Language and Job Training with Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, Virginia **2015-2016**

In federal testing, achieved 3/3 working-level-proficiency score in speaking and reading Spanish. Also trained in diplomatic tradecraft, including reporting, analysis, negotiations, public speaking, press engagements, building relations, interviewing, fraud detection, safety tactics when in a conflict zone or other dangerous situations, and consular-related issues and legislation.

Government and NGO Legal Experience

Attorney, Federal Defender's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah 2014-2015

Strategized with trial teams and researched and drafted appeals and sentencing briefs for various criminal cases. Supported clients in mental health court proceedings and committee meetings. Led efforts on clemency issues for former clients.

Clerk, The United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Salt Lake City, UT 2011-2012

Served on the first team of clerks for Judge Scott M. Matheson, Jr. Researched and drafted memoranda and opinions on criminal and civil appeals, managed interns, and participated in the hiring process for new clerks. Traveled regularly to Denver for court hearings. Developed expertise in federal law and appellate strategies and proceedings.

Clerk, Utah Supreme Court, Salt Lake City, UT 2010-2011

Clerked for Chief Justice Christine Durham. Researched and drafted opinions on criminal and civil appeals before the Utah Supreme Court. Managed interns and interviewed candidates for internships and clerkships. Developed expertise in Utah law and appellate proceedings.

Attorney Researcher Intern, Human Rights Watch, San Francisco, CA 2007-2008

Conducted research and analysis regarding potential human rights abuses of detained immigrants. Assisted with organization of a major fundraising event.

UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the Netherlands 2005

Served on a prosecution team of attorneys and investigators in the ongoing trial of an accused war criminal. Discovered evidence, researched law, participated in strategy sessions, and wrote motions. This was a four-month internship abroad for my last semester of law school.

Private Sector Legal Experience

Associate Attorney, Latham & Watkins, Washington, D.C. and Menlo Park, CA 2005-2007

Participated on legal teams in securities litigation, antitrust matters, white collar criminal investigations, government regulatory issues, healthcare, employment, environmental issues, corporate deals, tax issues, pro bono immigration, and international matters. Conducted on-site evidence gathering, participated in strategy sessions, wrote legal analysis and motions, and presented arguments in court.

Associate Attorney, Ray Quinney & Nebeker, Salt Lake City, UT 2008-2009

Specialized in litigation, including criminal, securities, intellectual property, and healthcare cases. Instrumental in providing a high-value referral to the firm through previous contacts in the law. Interacted with clients, researched evidence, and drafted legal arguments.

Teaching Experience

Academic Fellow, BYU Law School, Provo, UT 2012-2014

Designed and taught courses in criminal law, criminal procedure, and ethics. Researched and published articles on criminal law issues.

Teaching Fellow, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 2000-2001
Designed and taught undergraduate U.S. history courses.

Training Consultant, Tenfold Corporation, Draper, UT 1998-1999
Developed and delivered software technology training to varied businesses across the nation. Researched business processes of investment management, insurance, healthcare, and telecommunications firms to help tailor software to their needs. Taught writing standards and served on the company's editorial board.

Teacher, Palo Alto High School, Palo Alto, CA 1996-1997
Designed and taught English and humanities classes to secondary students. Worked with a team teaching the same students biology, history, and math. Together developed interdisciplinary experiences, including a camping field trip for the students to Yosemite National Park.

Portuguese Instructor, Missionary Training Center, Provo, UT 1995-1996
Taught Portuguese to undergraduate-aged students bound for missions in South America, Europe, and Africa. I had served a mission to Brazil, Recife Sul, from 1993-1995.

French Conversation Instructor, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 1992-1993
Taught and designed lessons for a French conversation lab for undergraduates.

Publications

Banning the Bing: Why Extreme Solitary Confinement is Cruel and Far Too Usual Punishment, *Indiana Law Journal*: Vol.90: Iss. 2, Article 7 (2015). Available at <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ilj/vol90/iss2/7>

- This piece was featured on a leading criminal law blog in March 2014 (Douglas Berman's Sentencing Law and Policy). It was also the subject of a radio interview at BYU.

A Right to Remain Psychotic? A New Standard for Involuntary Treatment in Light of Current Science, 47 Loy. L.A. L. Rev. 251 (2013). Available at <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/llr/vol47/iss1/5>

- As a result of this piece was invited to be on a discussion panel at a conference on criminal law and neuroscience at the University of Minnesota Law School in September 2013.

Death is Different No Longer: Abolishing the Insanity Defense is Cruel and Unusual under Graham v. Florida, 61 DePaul L. Rev. 1 (2011). Available at <https://via.library.depaul.edu/law-review/vol61/iss1/2>

Outrages upon Personal Dignities, Commentary on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Otto Triffterer ed., 2d ed. 2008).

- Co-authored with Patricia Viseur Sellers, Special Advisor for Gender for the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and Visiting Fellow at Oxford University.

U.S. State Department Awards

Superior Honor Award, U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan June 2025
“For exceptional dedication, coordination, and service during the May 2025 Pakistan-India crisis.”

Meritorious Honor Award, U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan **June 2025**
“For Betsy’s incisive reporting and deft diplomatic engagement ... that helped fill gaps in U.S. policymakers’ understanding of Afghanistan and advance U.S. interests in the country at a critical time.”

Meritorious Honor Award, USNATO, Brussels, Belgium **October 2024**
“For exceptional performance as Washington NATO summit Policy Coordinator, working tirelessly with the interagency and Allies to ensure a 75th anniversary event that showcased Alliance unity, commitment to support Ukraine, and enduring U.S. leadership.”

Superior Honor Award, USNATO, Brussels, Belgium **August 2023**
“In recognition of her outstanding performance as Executive Officer at the U.S. Mission to NATO at a time of extraordinary challenges, beginning with the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, continuing through Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and concluding with NATO’s historic Summit in Madrid.”

Meritorious Honor Award, Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic Office, Washington, D.C. **March 2021**
“For her consistently outstanding performance on the Norway Desk during a time of increased bilateral and multilateral engagement.”

Superior Honor Award, State Department Operations, Washington, D.C. **June 2019**
For “exceptional acts outside of the normal course of duties,” including aiding in the State Department response to developments such as terrorist attacks and drawdown efforts in disaster or conflict areas.

Meritorious Honor Award, U.S. Embassy Mexico City, Mexico **October 2017**
“For outstanding support of the Deputy Secretary’s first overseas trip to the OAS General Assembly in Cancun. Despite staffing cuts, last-minute changes, and late-breaking decisions, you facilitated the work of the Deputy Secretary, WHA Acting Assistant Secretary, the Acting Permanent Representative, and the Ambassador with professionalism, good humor, and consummate teamwork.”

Bar Memberships

California State Bar, 2005-present (inactive)
District of Columbia Bar, 2006-present (inactive)
Utah State Bar, 2009-present (inactive)

Select Professional Development

Pakistan Familiarization, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA **May 2024**
An overview of U.S. government policy objectives in Pakistan and the inter-relationship of diplomacy, defense, and development to achieve them. Addressed Pakistan’s geography, history, culture, politics and governance, foreign relations, development and economic trends, and emerging current issues.

Global China, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA **January 2023**
Enabled U.S. foreign affairs personnel with a China-focused assignment to apply a more sophisticated understanding of the PRC’s methods and strategies of exerting influence globally to their analysis and reporting.

Political Military Affairs, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA

June 2021

Prepared Department of State officers to work effectively with Department of Defense and other agency counterparts on a wide range of political-military issues, by examining the broad scope of political-military work and how it relates to broader national security policy.

International Negotiation: Art and Skills, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA

March 2021

In preparation for representing the United States in negotiations with other NATO Allies, attended this course introducing core negotiation concepts drawn principally from Harvard Program on Negotiation.

Leading at State, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA

February 2021

Training in core leadership principles with application to a State Department context.

Mexico, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA

August 2015

Examined the cultural, historical, social, and political issues within Mexico and discussed U.S. foreign policy objectives in the country.

International Institute of Humanitarian Law, San Remo, Italy, Geneva, Switzerland

July 2003

Humanitarian law course with an institute that has consultative status with several bodies of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Studied a wide range of subjects, including terrorism, refugees, human rights, and international courts.

Personal

Lived in Pakistan, Belgium, Mexico, the Netherlands, Brazil, Israel, the UK, Switzerland, California, Utah, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. and loved each location, its culture and people. Once proficient in French, Portuguese, and Spanish—but now quite rusty. Enjoy the outdoors, many sports, music, literature, art, farmers' markets, learning new things, and most especially my family and friends.