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Nov 04, 2016 by [Adam Clayton Powell, III](#)

New VOA Director: “Great Journalism is Great Public Diplomacy” ^[1]

Note from the CPD Blog Manager: *This post originally appeared at the [USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy's](#) web site.*

Amanda Bennett, the new Director of the Voice of America, was the featured speaker at this month's CCLP lunch forum just two weeks after she was sworn in. She introduced herself by saying she was not a diplomat, but she practices public diplomacy.

“I’m all journalist and no diplomat,” said Bennett, but she added, “Great journalism is in fact great public diplomacy.”

Bennett outlined plans to expand VOA coverage of several parts of “everyday American life,” including U.S. business, entrepreneurship and Silicon Valley.

“Iran is crazy for entrepreneurialism,” she explained. “We need to create robust coverage of entrepreneurialism which is a hallmark of our society... A rock star in China is Warren Buffett. So we need to beef up our coverage of American business and of American philanthropy,

which is probably the most robust of any in the world.”

Other areas she identified for expanded VOA attention include American education, women and medicine.

“People may fly to other countries to get their faces lifted, cheap treatments, medical tourism,” Bennett said, “but they come to the U.S. when they want to save their lives or the lives of their loved ones.”

Bennett identified VOA’s existing programs that teach English and explain U.S. politics as particular strengths.

“One of the most popular features of our Russian service is a video dictionary of American political terms,” she said, “little videos explaining, ‘What is a soccer mom?’ ‘What happens when you filibuster?’ ‘What does canvassing mean?’ And ‘how about the Bible Belt?’”

Live coverage of the event and Bennett’s remarks are available on demand at C-SPAN’s website.

Bennett’s remarks came at the monthly forum sponsored by the USC Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, in partnership with the Public Diplomacy Council and the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, and hosted at the American Foreign Service Association.

Photo courtesy CCLP
