

John T. Shaw

Official Bio

John T. Shaw joined the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute in January 2018, becoming the fourth director in its history. He established the Institute's "Better Politics, Smarter Government" agenda with the Reimagining American Statesmanship, Understanding Our New World, and Reimagining Illinois programs as its pillars.

[The Restoring American Statesmanship Program](#) is a multi-prong initiative. Shaw created the Paul Simon-Jim Edgar statesmanship award with the former Illinois Governor. It is presented to an elected state or local government official who has demonstrated a pattern of public service characterized by vision, courage, compassion, effectiveness, civility, and bipartisanship. In addition to writing a primer on Statesmanship along with many essays, Shaw created and teaches a course on Restoring American Statesmanship to university honors students and continuing education students. He is now working on a complementary program, Reimagining American Statesmanship, which considers how the traditions of statesmanship can help the United States confront present and future challenges including climate change, deficits and debt, income inequality, immigration, and racial inequities.

Shaw created the Institute's [Understanding Our New World](#) virtual series in 2020. Since then, he has interviewed more than ninety diplomats, historians, university presidents, foundation leaders, think tank scholars, philanthropists, and military leaders. The hour-long interviews have been viewed across the U.S. and in more 25 countries. His guests have included Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, William Burns, now the director of the CIA, Pete Buttigieg, now Secretary of Transportation, Ruth Simmons, former president of Smith College and Brown University, and Louise Richardson, former vice chancellor of Oxford and St. Andrews and the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Shaw has established a host of initiatives under the Renewing Illinois banner. The Paul Simon Democracy Prize is awarded annually to Illinois university students for the design and implementation of projects to revitalize democracy in their communities. The Renewing Illinois Summit brings students from public and private colleges around the state to Southern Illinois University to discuss and debate creative solutions to revitalize the Prairie State. Shaw also produces and hosts the Meet the Mayor, Illinois Authors, and Rising Stars of Illinois Politics speaker programs. All have elevated the Institute's profile in its home state.

Prior to his tenure at the Institute, Shaw was a reporter in Washington, DC for more than twenty-five years. He covered Congress for *Market News International*, a global financial wire service, and the diplomatic community for the *Washington Diplomat*, a monthly magazine.

A frequent public speaker, Shaw has given presentations at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate, Hoover Institution, Meridian International Center, German Marshall Fund, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Robert Dole Institute of Politics, University of Virginia's Center for Politics, Sydney University, U.S. Senate Library, National Archives, and the Bryant Park summer lecture series.

Shaw is the author of six books:

- [*The Education of a Statesman: How Global Leaders Can Repair a Fractured World*](#) (2024)
- [*Rising Star, Setting Sun: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and the Presidential Transition that Changed America*](#) (2018)
- [*JFK in the Senate: Pathway to the Presidency*](#) (2013)
- [*Richard G. Lugar, Statesman of the Senate*](#) (2012)
- [*The Ambassador: Inside the Life of a Working Diplomat*](#) (2006)
- [*Washington Diplomacy: Profiles of People of World Influence*](#) (2002)

Shaw's numerous media appearances include the PBS *NewsHour* and C-SPAN. He contributed a weekly segment on Congress for LAist/KPCC public radio in Los Angeles for many years and was a media fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. His articles have been published in the *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston Globe*, *The American Interest*, and other publications. He has participated in two JFK documentaries, *The House that Jack Built* for PBS and *Kennedy* which first aired on the History Channel.

Shaw was born and raised in Peoria, Illinois. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois and his master's in History from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He began his career as a Governor's Fellow in Springfield, Illinois, worked in state government, and later participated in a training program with the European Union in Brussels before moving into journalism with a position at the *Wall Street Journal Europe*.

He serves on the Board of Directors of Forefront, an association representing Illinois grantmakers and nonprofits, and is a member of the Hall of Fame of Historic Illinoisans Committee of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. He has taught classes on the U.S. Congress and American Statesmanship at Southern Illinois University, the home of the Institute.

Shaw is a 2024-25 Higher Education Ambassador at the Council on Foreign Relations and writes a [monthly essay about statesmanship](#) for *The Chicago Tribune*.