

*Where Hope Meets Action*

# CONVERGENCE

## 2026 ANNUAL SUMMIT



### Speaker Biographies



#### **Neil Bradley**

**Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

Neil Bradley, executive vice president and chief policy officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has spent two decades working directly with congressional committee chairpersons and other high-ranking policymakers to achieve solutions. At the Chamber, Bradley is responsible for aligning the organization's overall policy priorities and advocacy efforts. He oversees several major policy divisions within the Chamber: Economic Policy; Environment, Technology & Regulatory Affairs; Labor, Immigration & Employee Benefits; National Security and Emergency Preparedness; and Small Business Policy. Health Care Policy and Transportation Infrastructure Policy are also under his leadership.

Before joining the Chamber, Bradley was president of Chartwell Policy Solutions, LLC, a research, analysis, and advisory firm focused on public policy issues. In addition to his work at Chartwell, he served as chief strategy officer for the nonprofit Conservative Reform Network (CRN), the leading organization supporting the Conservative Reform Movement. There, he produced, incubated, and promoted ideas, policies, and efforts to grow the American economy, expand the middle class, and create opportunities for all Americans. Prior to founding Chartwell and joining CRN in 2015, Bradley spent nearly 20 years working in the House of Representatives, including 11 years working for the House Republican leadership. He served as deputy chief of staff for Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (CA), where he developed the legislative agenda for House Republicans, oversaw policy formulation in the leader's office, and coordinated committee activity in the House. Bradley held the same position for Eric Cantor (VA) during his tenure as majority leader. Previously, he was policy director for House Republican Whip Roy Blunt (MO).

Earlier in his career, Bradley served for four-and-a-half years as executive director of the Republican Study Committee. He also held numerous positions in the office of then-Rep. Tom Coburn (R-OK).

While working on Capitol Hill, Bradley was regularly named to Roll Call's list of 50 top congressional staffers. Bradley, a graduate of Georgetown University, resides in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Kiki, and their son, Peter. He is a native of Sapulpa, Oklahoma.



## Stuart Butler

Scholar-in-Residence in Economic Studies at  
The Brookings Institution

Stuart Butler is a scholar in residence in Economic Studies at The Brookings Institution. Prior to joining Brookings, Butler spent 35 years at The Heritage Foundation as Director of the Center for Policy Innovation and earlier as Vice President for Domestic and Economic Policy Studies.

Butler is a member of the editorial board of Health Affairs and the board of Mary's Center, a group of Washington, D.C.-area community health centers. He also serves on several advisory councils, including for the Peterson Center on Healthcare. He served as a member of the Advisory Group for the Culture of Health Program and as a member of the Board on Health Care Services of the National Academy of Medicine. He also served on the panel of health advisers for the Congressional Budget Office. For over 10 years, he was an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, and in 2002, he was an Institute of Politics Fellow at Harvard University.

Butler has played a prominent role in the debate over health care equity and reform, focusing on social determinants of health and the use of market approaches and state innovation. He has also researched and written on a wide range of other issues, including budget process reform, the future of higher education, economic mobility, and federal entitlement reform.

Stuart Butler was born in Shrewsbury, England, and emigrated to the United States in 1975, becoming a U.S. citizen in 1995. He was educated at St. Andrews University in Scotland, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in physics and mathematics, a Master of Arts degree in economics and history, and a Ph.D. in American economic history. He is married with two daughters and resides in Washington, DC.



## Robert Fersh

Founder and Senior Advisor at Convergence

Rob Fersh is the Founder and Senior Advisor to Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, a non-profit organization he founded in 2009 to promote consensus solutions to issues of domestic importance. He served as its first CEO from 2009 to 2020.

Immediately prior, Rob served as the United States country director for Search for Common Ground, an international conflict resolution organization.

While at SFCG, he directed national policy consensus projects on health care coverage for the uninsured and U.S.-Muslim relations.

In the 1986-98 period, Rob served as president of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a leading NGO working to alleviate hunger in the United States. Rob also served on the staffs of three Congressional committees, working for U.S. Representative Leon Panetta and for Senators Patrick Leahy and Edmund Muskie. While a Congressional staff member and at FRAC, he was deeply involved in shepherding the passage of bipartisan legislation to reduce hunger in the United States.

Rob captured his experience in a book co-written with Convergence CEO and President, Mariah Levison, and published by Wiley in July 2024. It is entitled, *From Conflict to Convergence: Coming Together to Solve Tough Problems*.

Rob has held additional positions in the federal executive branch and the non-profit sector. He was a 1994 recipient of the Prudential Foundation Prize for Non-Profit Leadership. Rob holds a law degree from Boston University and a bachelor's degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University. He is married, has four children, and three grandchildren. He resides in Bethesda, MD.



**Suzanne Ghais**  
Programs Director at Convergence

Suzanne Ghais, Ph.D., is Convergence's Programs Director and an expert on conflict resolution, consensus building, and peace processes. She has nearly three decades of experience as a mediator, facilitator, conflict analyst, and trainer spanning diverse subject matter, including environmental, public policy, organizational, consumer, community, and political/armed conflict issues in both domestic and international settings.

Prior to joining Convergence, Suzanne was executive director of Pathfinders4Peace, which conducted Track II (unofficial) diplomacy on the "Anglophone Conflict" in Cameroon, and principal at Ghais Mediation and Facilitation, LLC. She has served as an adjunct faculty member at American University's School of International Service, the University of Denver's Korbel School of International Studies, and the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, teaching conflict assessment, conflict prevention, international negotiation, and facilitation skills.

She has conducted dozens of skill training courses on mediation, facilitation, arbitration, negotiation, and conflict resolution and is the author of *Extreme Facilitation: Guiding Groups through Controversy and Complexity* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2005) as well as numerous articles.

Suzanne earned her bachelor's degree from Brown University, her master's degree from the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (now the Carter School) at George Mason University, and her Ph.D. in international relations, with a focus on peace processes, from American University's School of International Service.

Suzanne lives with her husband and younger daughter in the Denver/Boulder area. In her free time, she enjoys playing piano, hiking, reading, and yoga.



**Monika Glowacki**  
Senior Director of Research and Programs at Convergence

Monika is the Senior Director of Research and Programs. She develops the pipeline of projects ripe for Convergence's collaborative problem-solving methodology, conducts research assessments into project issue areas, and leads collaboratives. Her work at Convergence spans technology and society, democracy and elections, and climate, among others.

Monika received her master's from the University of Oxford and her bachelor's from Harvard University in the social and computational sciences. She has previously worked at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, the Oxford Internet Institute in the United Kingdom, and the Harvard Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Originally from New York, Monika enjoys playing pickleball, swimming, cross-country skiing, video games, cooking vegan dishes, and learning new languages.



**Shannon Green**  
President & CEO of Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement

Shannon N. Green serves as the President and CEO of Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE). Previously, Ms. Green held senior positions in the public sector, including as the Assistant to the Administrator of the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) and Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Task Force at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In these roles, she led USAID's global efforts to invigorate democracy, enhance human rights and justice, and bolster governance that advances the public interest.

Before returning to public service in 2021, Ms. Green was the Senior Director of Programs at the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) and Director and Senior Fellow of the Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), where her research focused on addressing threats to democratic institutions and norms, enhancing justice and accountability, and protecting civic space.

From 2004-2015, Ms. Green held several prominent positions in the U.S. Government, including as the Senior Director for Global Engagement on the National Security Council. In that role, she spearheaded efforts to deepen and broaden U. S. engagement with critical populations overseas, including the President's Stand with Civil Society Agenda and young leader initiatives around the world. Prior to that, Ms. Green served in the DRG Center, where she developed policies, strategies, and programs to advance political reform and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ms. Green received her B.A. in Political Science and History from the University of Georgia and her M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University, and has taught graduate classes as an adjunct professor for Syracuse University Maxwell School.



## **Romanita Hairston**

**CEO of the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust**

As Chief Executive Officer, Romanita oversees all activities (grantmaking, investments, programs, and operations) of the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, a private, nonprofit foundation serving the Pacific Northwest since 1975. An accomplished team builder, convener, and leader, Romanita draws on more than two decades of experience in the nonprofit, for-profit, philanthropic, and board service sectors to help steward the mission of the foundation.

A graduate of the University of Washington, Hairston began her career in the nonprofit sector at World Vision, the largest child-focused private charity in the world. Over 20 years, Hairston gained a deep understanding of nonprofit service, management, and leadership as she held a variety of roles, including a decade as vice president of US programs.

In 2016, she entered the philanthropic sector, joining the Murdock Trust as a program director. During her tenure, Hairston walked alongside dozens of nonprofit leaders as they pursued capacity-building grants with the charitable trust.

In addition, Hairston collaborated with Murdock Trust staff, partners, and community organizations to develop enrichment programs and convenings designed to serve the diverse needs of the Pacific Northwest.

Hairston would move to the for-profit sector and join Microsoft in 2018, where she focused on the future of work and learning. In her role, she led a global skilling effort focused on improving employability in higher education through technical skilling and workforce partnerships. As the leader of the technical content portfolio team, Hairston worked to build capacity across Microsoft's solution areas for its global customer, partner, and future generation audiences.

Hairston earned an MBA in global development and nonprofit management from Eastern University in Philadelphia and is the founder of MORE320, a nonprofit consulting company supporting organizations as they seek to effect social change. An active volunteer, Hairston currently serves as the board president for Global Women. She is on the Leadership Council for Breaking Ground, the board of directors for the Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, and is a member of the Board of Trustees at Candid. She is a member of the Rotary Club of Seattle. She has served on the board of India Partners, the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology, Urban Alliance, Urban Impact, Impact Latin America, Kids In Need Foundation, and Renaissance Leadership Group, as well as volunteered with the Convergence Center for Policy Resolution and the Rhythms of Grace Women's Retreat.



**Mariah Levison**  
CEO and President of Convergence

Mariah serves as Convergence's CEO and President after serving as Chief Program Officer. Mariah uses a deep understanding of human relations to build trust and relationships across differences, which lead to consensus-based solutions to complex and contentious issues. Her work in consensus building includes assessment, design, facilitation, mediation, collaborative processes, dialogue, public engagement best practices, restorative justice, and program development.

Additionally, Mariah has been teaching these skills for twenty years in settings ranging from community trainings to trainings for foreign governments to teaching the mediation clinic at the University of Minnesota Law School.

Prior to joining Convergence, Mariah helped to create and run the Minnesota State Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution. In that position, Mariah used a collaborative problem-solving process very similar to the one used by Convergence to build consensus on state, tribal, and local issues; built the capacity of government to work well across difference; and facilitated the Minnesota Legislative Civility Caucus. Before joining the State of Minnesota, Mariah worked for nonprofit dispute resolution centers in Chicago, New York, and Minneapolis. Mariah captured her expertise, wisdom, and years of experience in a new book co-written with Convergence Founder and First CEO, Rob Fersh, entitled, *From Conflict to Convergence: Coming Together to Solve Tough Problems*.

Mariah has a Master's in International Affairs with a focus in conflict management from Washington University in St. Louis.

When she isn't working, Mariah can be found biking, cross-country skiing or reading books with her two young sons and husband in Minneapolis.



**Beth Miller**  
Executive Vice President of Convergence

Beth's passion for organizational strategy, meaningful relationships, nonprofit administration, and collaboration led her to the Executive Vice President role at Convergence. As EVP, she co-leads organizational strategy in partnership with the CEO and oversees fundraising, communications, operations, and finance. Beth works closely with external partners and funders to deepen and leverage connections within the Convergence community, championing new opportunities. She thrives on connecting with others and has a knack for building and maintaining relationships and leading and managing teams. Prior to joining Convergence, Beth worked for nearly two decades across various nonprofits and associations in a variety of roles, including development, membership, events, and board management. Beth holds an undergraduate degree from George Washington University and resides in Alexandria, VA, with her husband, two young daughters, and dog.



**Jason Purnell**  
President and CEO of the James S. McDonnell Foundation

Dr. Jason Purnell joined the James S. McDonnell Foundation as President & CEO in 2023 after leading the community health improvement strategy at BJC HealthCare. He created health equity programs with colleagues and partners and introduced an anchor institution agenda focused on investments in economic opportunity for historically excluded communities. This work was built on his scholarship at Washington University's Brown School, where, in 2014, he and his collaborators released the seminal "For the Sake of All" report on African American health in St. Louis, inspiring policy changes and programmatic innovations. Dr. Purnell's BA is from Harvard, and his PhD is from Ohio State University.



## Herman "Art" Taylor

President and CEO of AFP Global

Herman "Art" Taylor is President and Chief Executive Officer of AFP Global, the leading professional association for fundraising professionals worldwide. Since assuming leadership in April 2025, Art is guiding AFP Global through a comprehensive strategic transformation to address critical challenges facing the profession, including declining donor participation and high job turnover rates. His leadership focuses on implementing diversified membership tiers, AI-powered career development, comprehensive belonging initiatives, innovative programming, and technology-enhanced learning with personalized platforms and micro-credentialing.

Art brings to AFP Global a distinguished 24-year tenure as President and CEO of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance (2001-2025), where he transformed charity accountability and donor education. Under his leadership, the Alliance increased charity evaluation reports from 250 to over 1,400, introduced the widely-recognized Accredited Charity Seal with over 1 billion public impressions, and pioneered innovations including the AI-powered [Askgive.org](https://www.askgive.org) donor education tool, the blockchain-based [Givesafely.io](https://www.givesafely.io) donation platform, and The Heart of Giving Podcast, ranked #1 nationally in the nonprofit genre.

Art is the 2025 Recipient of Independent Sector's John W. Gardner Leadership Award and has been named 5 times to the Non-Profit Times Power and Influence Top 50 and a member of its Hall of Fame. His collaborative approach at the Alliance led to groundbreaking initiatives, including "The Overhead Myth" campaign, the "Advancing Collaboration" program that earned the 2018 ASAE Foundation Innovation Award, and partnerships with Stanford Social Innovation Review, GuideStar, and Independent Sector to advance nonprofit transparency and effectiveness.

Since 2018, Art has served as a lecturer at Columbia University School of Professional Studies, teaching Ethics in the Nonprofit Sector and leadership and management of nonprofits to MS candidates. He also serves as Adjunct Faculty in the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy's doctoral program in philanthropic leadership and is a regular guest lecturer at Georgetown McDonough School and the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington.

His current board service includes: Senior Vice Chair of the Franklin & Marshall College Board of Trustees, where he has been a member since 1993, Convergence Center for Policy Resolution (Chair), Institute For the Future, Certified Fund Raising Executives (CFRE), National Human Services Assembly (NHSA), American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA), Creating Healthier Communities (CHC), and Elevate 215. He also serves on the Salvation Army National Advisory Board.

He has previously served on numerous nonprofit boards, including Vice Chair of Independent Sector (1998-2003), the US Office of Personnel Management Combined Federal Campaign 50 Year

Commission, and as an advisor to the National Football League Player Care Foundation board.

Art holds a BA in Business Administration from Franklin & Marshall College (1980), where he received an honorary Doctor of Laws (2002), and a JD from Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law (1989). He is a Certified Public Accountant and completed the University of Oxford Said Business School Certificate in Blockchain Strategy Program. He received a foresight practitioner certificate from the Institute for the Future (2015).

Before entering nonprofit leadership, Art gained business experience at Deloitte & Touché LLP, UGI Corporation, and Keystone Foods Corporation. Earlier in his nonprofit career, he led the Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (1990-1999), growing the civil rights employment network to serve over two million.

Art is a sought-after speaker on charity accountability, fundraising ethics, and nonprofit governance, having delivered hundreds of speeches and testified before Congress on improving charitable sector trustworthiness. He has been named five times to the Non-Profit Times list of the Power and Influence top 50 in the nonprofit sector and is a member of its Hall of Fame. DCA Live cited him in 2018 for demonstrating exceptional performance in advancing his organization's mission.

Art is a graduate of South Philadelphia High School and a member of its Cultural Hall of Fame, reflecting his commitment to community and educational opportunity throughout his career.