Background information on the IFES's creation and Clif White's role

In 1982, President Reagan delivered his Westminster speech on freedom and democracy, and in the 1980s, many countries, especially Latin America, moved toward free, fair, and multiparty elections. USAID was called upon to advise on the election processes in many of these countries. USAID announced bids for that work with specifications, but the quality and effectiveness of the work done by the various contractors were mixed. No existing organization or group had sufficient in-house expertise or experienced personnel to support the needed technical election work.

Peter McPherson, then Administrator of USAID, and Jay Morris, his Deputy Administrator,(now deceased) decided USAID should create an entity that could develop, deliver, and sustain the needed election expertise. Eddie Maye, a leading GOP campaign operative and previously Administrative Assistant to Sen Dominici of N.M. and his associate Ladonna Lee were asked to further develop the idea.

McPherson and Morris reviewed the report and decided that a new organization should have an equal number of Republican and Democratic board members and officers. Peter decided to call Clif White and asked him to put the organization together. Clif White was an obvious choice to lead this new organization. In 1964, Clif managed Berry Goldwater's presidential nomination campaign, and had managed numerous state and congressional campaigns. Clif was also no stranger to working overseas. He had hands-on campaign experience in Venezuela and other Latin American countries.

Clif accepted Peter's request to put together and chair this new organization with the assistance of a small USAID grant. Clif then recruited former Sen. Richard Stone of Florida as his Democrat counterpart

Clif served as the founding chairman of IFES board at its creation in 1987 until his death in January 1993 and was the important force behind IFES' growth and successes during those early years. He brought decades of political and private sector expertise and he significantly increased IFES's viability and international visibility.

Early on Peter recognized that IFES required staff to manage IFES' first organizational grant from USAID to provide continued coordination with USAID's regional bureaus and US embassies abroad. In the early summer of 1988, Sarah Tinsley, a former USAID policy director, was required to serve as IFES' acting

director. Sarah had experience managing USAID worldwide program grants. She also came with political experience from her days at the RNC and her time as a political director with the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Beginning in 1988 until her departure from IFES in 1993, Sarah recruited and managed the headquarters and international field staff. She also focused on recruiting regional subject matter experts to provide country specific guidance to requesting countries on election monitoring, providing technical assistance with drafting new constitutions, the creation of multiparty ballots and ongoing ballot security.

During Sarah's six year tenure at IFES, she drafted and defended all grant applications to USAID. Her successful grants were awarded from USAID's Latin America/Caribbean and Africa bureaus as well as from our embassies in Eastern Europe. Sarah's final grant proposal yielded a $10 million, multi year program grant from USAID's Africa Bureau.

Clif White understood the critical importance of raising private sector recognition and financial support for IFES. Sarah accompanied Cliff on two fundraising trips to NYC to introduce IFES to the senior leadership of the world's largest philanthropic foundations. He advocated tirelessly on the importance of supporting nascent democracies and their need for free and fair elections. Tragically, Clif's failing health ultimately prevented him from continuing to nurture those relationships and no grants monies were awarded from these foundations.