

Statement of Anne Hall
Nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 21, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members of the Committee,

It is a privilege to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania. I am humbled and honored by the trust and confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee, your staffs, and your Congressional colleagues to build on the already deep and productive partnership between the United States and Lithuania.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to acknowledge some family members who are here today, as well as some who were unable to attend. I am deeply grateful to my mother, Rose Anne, who is here today, and my father, Brad, who will watch this later from Maine, for inspiring me to explore the wider world and supporting me at every step along the way. I am also delighted that my sister Sue, her husband Scott, and my niece, Emma, were able to come from Colorado to be here today.

For 29 years I have cherished the privilege of serving my country as a career diplomat in Europe, Asia, and South America. I believe my experience in our Office of Nordic and Baltic Affairs at a critical time as we supported the Baltic states' entry into NATO and the European Union, my service as Consul General in Krakow and Deputy Chief of Mission in Lithuania, and more recently as Director of our Office of Central European Affairs, equip me well to lead our mission in Lithuania.

The United States has long enjoyed a close relationship with Lithuania. It is a relationship built on the bedrock of America's steadfast refusal to recognize the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union and the partnership of the United States with an independent Lithuania in addressing today's global challenges to democracy and security.

Since its re-independence in 1990, Lithuania has taken on increasingly prominent roles in transatlantic and global institutions to meet these challenges – roles that would have been unimaginable just 26 years ago. Since joining NATO and the EU in 2004, Lithuania has chaired the Community of Democracies and the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and in 2013 became the first post-Soviet state to hold the Presidency of the European Union. In that capacity it championed democratic principles in other countries of the former Soviet Union and hosted the Eastern Partnership Summit that became an antecedent to the Maidan protests in Ukraine. During Lithuania's 2014-2015 tenure on the UN Security Council, it actively partnered with the United States to promote peace, combat terrorism, and advance human rights on a global scale.

Lithuania has long been a staunch and outspoken supporter of Ukraine. Since 2014, it has worked with us to maintain a strong sanctions regime on Russia and press for full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Lithuania has provided generous help to Ukraine in the form of advisors, development aid, and military training and supplies as it assists the Ukrainian government on the path of improved security, transparency, and rule of law. In addition, Lithuania strongly supports the Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia and Moldova.

In Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea and aggression in Ukraine, Lithuania sees a threat to its own hard-won independence. Lithuania has warmly welcomed U.S. and NATO reassurance measures, especially the presence of American troops on its soil. Lithuania also has committed to meeting the NATO defense spending benchmark of two percent of GDP by 2018, reaching 1.5 percent this year. The government is using these funds to improve Lithuania's defense capabilities, investing in modern equipment and enhancing NATO interoperability.

A committed ally outside of Europe as well, in Afghanistan Lithuania led a Provincial Reconstruction Team, and its Special Operations Forces served alongside ours without caveat until 2015. Lithuania now provides support for the development of the Afghan National Security Forces and contributes to the Counter-ISIL Coalition. It has donated humanitarian aid to Iraqi victims of ISIL and is preparing to deploy police trainers to Iraq. If confirmed, I will continue our close cooperation in addressing global security challenges.

The strength of any country depends on its economic prosperity as well as its security, and Lithuania's economy has shown both resilience and growth. After a 15 percent drop in GDP in 2009, Lithuania's economy rebounded to become one of the fastest growing in the EU. When Lithuania's primary export market – Russia, contracted last year, Lithuania succeeded in finding alternative markets for its exports. Its GDP now is predicted to grow by 2.6 percent this year.

Over the past few years, Lithuania has made impressive progress in diversifying its energy sources, bolstering its own energy security as well as that of

the Baltic region. It launched a floating LNG terminal in January, 2015, decreasing its dependence on Russian gas from 100 percent to approximately five percent today. In close cooperation with the EU it is building gas and electricity links to its European neighbors; and it is creating a competitive regional energy market. Lithuania is rapidly becoming a regional energy hub and a model for others seeking to enhance their energy security.

Against this backdrop of growth and development, Lithuanian policymakers and the private sector support the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP). They see it as an opportunity for economic growth as well as a second anchor in the transatlantic security relationship. The United States is Lithuania's seventh largest trading partner, with more than \$1.5 billion in total bilateral trade in 2015. If confirmed, I will encourage Lithuania's continued support for T-TIP and work to expand our trade and commercial ties, including support for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Lithuania has made great strides over the past twenty years in building a vibrant democracy. It has developed strategic plans and passed legislation to fight corruption, combat human trafficking, and reduce domestic violence. It is working to fully integrate linguistic minorities into Lithuanian society and strengthen respect for religious and ethnic diversity. Our Embassy in Vilnius has vigorously supported these efforts, and if confirmed, I will continue this vital support.

Finally, the success of our efforts in all of the areas I have touched upon today ultimately rests on the strong friendship between Lithuanians and Americans. If confirmed, I will make public outreach throughout the country a high priority, promoting increased exchanges and business, educational, professional, and cultural connections.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.