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U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and humbled by the confidence that President Obama has shown in me with this nomination.

My Armenian grandmother, whose locket I am wearing, had only a grade school education. When she came to this country, fleeing persecution and poverty in her homeland, I don't think she could have imagined the path that would bring me here.

Her younger son served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He earned a Ph.D. in math, married another professor from Germany (my mother, who later became a small business owner), and they had a daughter who ended up at this table.

I am my grandmother's American dream.

My parents would also have been very proud of this nomination.

I would like to introduce my husband. My family is more important to me than anything, and I wouldn't be here if he and our two children were not willing to embark on a genuine adventure.

I've been working on U.S. Asia policy for some 15 years now, since I left the staff of the National Security Council—first as the director of the Center for Asia Pacific Policy at the RAND Corporation, and now as a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. In those jobs, I traveled to the region frequently and had the opportunity to meet with Asian leaders and work closely with my Asian counterparts.

I am thrilled by the prospect of entering government again, and serving my country, if confirmed as the next Ambassador to ASEAN.

I want to acknowledge the key role that members of the Senate and of the House have played in recognizing the growing importance of ASEAN, including creating this position in 2006. I will count on your continued engagement if confirmed.

Just as the rebalance to Asia is an important part of the Administration's foreign policy, engagement with ASEAN plays a central role in the rebalance.

Increasingly, the most challenging issues in Asia - energy security, territorial disputes, climate, human trafficking - can only be solved multilaterally. ASEAN is at the heart of Asia's institutions, providing the architecture to work through these issues, and that is why as Secretary Kerry said last year: "The partnership that we share with ASEAN remains a top priority for the Obama Administration."

What binds the ten countries in ASEAN together is their commitment to non-violence and the rule of law. We share those values, and we share ASEAN's vision of a peaceful, prosperous rules-based order in the Asia-Pacific.

If confirmed, and with your help, I will work with ASEAN to further our common values, including human rights for the people of Southeast Asia.

The United States has other important interests in the region including economic opportunity. Southeast Asia's over 600 million people already are America's fourth largest export market, supporting over half a million US jobs.

ASEAN is pursuing an integrated ASEAN Economic Community, and the United States is supporting that effort. In 2012, President Obama established the U.S.-ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement initiative to promote increased U.S. trade with and investment in the region, and to encourage ASEAN countries to join high-standard trade agreements. If confirmed, and with your help, I will continue this work to expand U.S. businesses' access to the growing ASEAN market, creating more jobs for Americans and realizing ASEAN's own goals.

Energy, environment and climate are critical issues in Southeast Asia. As a Californian, I especially welcome the chance to engage with the region on

how to protect oceans and rivers--these critical natural resources that provide food security and economic livelihoods for so many.

Our engagement with ASEAN is also about its people, many of whom are our relatives. Over 6 million Americans identify with an ASEAN ethnicity.

The region is young. Sixty five percent of ASEAN's people are under the age of 35. With the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative that President Obama launched in April, we are looking to build ties with the leaders of tomorrow, giving them a platform to work across ASEAN borders to solve social and economic challenges.

All of our interests in Southeast Asia ultimately rest on the peace and stability made possible by our enduring security presence in the Asia Pacific. Two treaty allies, the Philippines and Thailand, are members of ASEAN, and all five Pacific allies are members of the East Asia Summit. The U.S. response after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines shows the unique capabilities our military and civilian agencies bring to bear and demonstrates our deep and abiding commitment to addressing both traditional and non-traditional security challenges in the region.

Half of the tonnage of the world's ship-based cargo passes through the South China Sea. The United States has a national interest in the unfettered flow of this commerce and in freedom of navigation and overflight in these waters.

We have a deep stake in ensuring that the territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea are solved peacefully, without coercion, force, or intimidation and in accordance with international law.

Unfortunately, we have seen lately what appears to be a pattern of unilateral actions by China to advance its territorial and maritime claims, the latest of which is China's introduction of an oil rig into disputed waters near the Paracel Islands. This is provocative and raises tensions, and it highlights the need for claimants to clarify their claims in accordance with international law.

America supports ASEAN's strong and unified voice on these disputes and its efforts to manage them in a manner that is consistent with a rules-based regional order and international law. We encourage ASEAN and China's

efforts to conclude a meaningful Code of Conduct. A peaceful, rules-based process will benefit all the claimants, big and small and help preserve regional peace and stability.

An effective ASEAN will have lasting benefits for the region and for our shared future. If confirmed, and with your help, I will commit myself to deepening our ties with this important organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer your questions, now or at any time in the future.