

Testimony of Charles H. Rivkin

Assistant Secretary Designate for the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs

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Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker and Members of the Committee. Before I begin, I want to acknowledge my extraordinary wife Susan and thank her for her important work in France, as well as for her continued support and sacrifice. Our children Elias and Lily, who are in college and couldn't attend this hearing, have been inspired by a family tradition of public service and are an enormous source of pride.

It is an honor to be here today as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs. I am doubly honored that President Obama and Secretary Kerry are placing their trust in me for a second time, and that after more than four years of serving my country overseas as U.S. Ambassador to France, they have asked me to come back to Washington to serve in a different capacity. I am humbled by their faith and excited by the new challenges and opportunities before me.

In the days since President Obama nominated me as Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, many of my colleagues in the private sector have asked me what this Bureau does to promote their interests. My simple answer is that the State Department's Economic Bureau does two basic things: It creates jobs for Americans and keeps our country safe.

As Secretary Kerry has testified before this Committee, "now more than ever economic policy is foreign policy." If confirmed, I will build on the work of President Obama and Secretary Kerry to use economic engagement as a way to foster growth and prosperity around the world, which safeguards security and prosperity at home. That is the core mission of the State Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, also known as "EB".

If confirmed, I would provide leadership to over 200 talented Foreign Service and Civil Service professionals here in Washington, D.C. and provide direction to our greatest asset -- a network of more than 1,100 State Department economic professionals abroad, including the U.S. Mission to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development).

If confirmed, I will help these dedicated public servants level the playing field for American workers around the world by breaking down barriers to U.S. business success in foreign markets, by promoting U.S. exports, and by attracting job-creating foreign investment to the United States. EB plays an important role enforcing intellectual property rights, promoting innovation, supporting entrepreneurship, negotiating trade agreements, and ensuring that everything from car parts to medicines is safe and reliable. If confirmed, I would oversee the negotiation of air transport agreements that link U.S. cities with the rest of the world. I would prioritize work with our partners around the globe to maintain a free, open, and accessible global internet. Under my leadership, EB would promote security by continuing to disrupt the financial pipelines that terrorists rely on to fund attacks against the United States and our allies, and I would help implement and administer targeted sanctions against those who threaten peace and stability.

I am excited by the prospect of leading EB because, if confirmed, I believe I would bring a unique combination of skills to the job: As a CEO, I ran several successful business enterprises; and as a diplomat, I ran one the largest and most complex U.S. embassies in the world.

I know the importance of having the U.S. government on your side when you're looking at overseas markets and trying to navigate uncharted territories. As Chief of Mission, I saw firsthand what dedicated U.S. government employees can accomplish together. I was responsible for coordinating the work of more than 40 U.S. government agencies in France including the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Agriculture, Homeland Security and Commerce. I know how to bring an interagency team together to get things done and, if confirmed, would bring this "whole of Government" approach to my new job. Recent Presidential priorities, such as the National Export Initiative and SelectUSA, benefit from this approach.

While serving in Paris, I had the honor and privilege to host Congressional delegations and work with Congress to advance America's interests. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing that partnership, and engaging in frequent consultations with this Committee and its staff.

If confirmed, I would be the first non-career bilateral ambassador to lead EB, and my experience in both the public and private sectors would give me insight into how we could better leverage our Embassies around the world in support of U.S. economic policy. I also understand the need to be even more innovative and creative in how we conduct modern diplomacy. The U.S. Mission to France, for example, became the first U.S. Embassy in the world to have a fleet of American-made electric cars thanks to a willingness to embrace new ideas from our young Foreign Service officers in the field.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, if confirmed by the United States Senate, I will help reinforce Secretary Kerry's vision of the prominence of economic affairs in foreign policy and I will take a "whole of Government" approach in sending a clear signal that America is open for business. I will dedicate myself to completely fulfill my Bureau's mandate of creating more jobs and making America more secure.

I truly look forward to this important challenge, and would be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.