

**Opening Statement of Mr. Lee Lipton
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines
Senate Foreign Relations
March 5, 2026**

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored to be President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines. I appreciate your time and consideration.

I would also like to recognize my wife and soulmate of more than 45 years, Erika, and our amazing sons, Max and Dylan. Their steadfast love and support have sustained me throughout my career in business and public service. If my parents were alive today, they would be beyond proud to see me sit before you.

Over the course of my 50-year professional career, I have led businesses in the culinary and fashion industries, built international partnerships, created jobs, mentored young professionals, and navigated complex regulatory environments. I look forward to utilizing these skills to the benefit of the American and Filipino people. I developed a lasting respect for the country during my early visits to the Philippines as an entrepreneur, manufacturing clothing decades ago. I was deeply impressed by the Filipino people's energy, resilience, and strong sense of family and community.

Community and people-to-people ties have always mattered to me. The Philippines has a word that captures that spirit — *bayanihan* [buy-yaan-nee-haan] — working together for the common good. With more than 27 billion dollars in bilateral trade in 2025, roughly 375,000 Americans residing in the Philippines, and approximately 5 million Filipinos and Filipino-Americans contributing to communities across the United States, our countries are linked in ways that extend far beyond security cooperation and veterans affairs.

Filipino-Americans are among the largest Asian American groups in the U.S. military, serving across various branches. According to recent estimates, there are around 15,000 active-duty Filipino-American service members in the U.S. Armed Forces. If confirmed, I would work to expand collaboration in the other areas where our interests align — healthcare, education, semiconductors, critical minerals, energy, infrastructure, humanitarian assistance and disaster response,

tourism, and sports diplomacy, just to name a few — while ensuring that our economic relationship remains fair and reciprocal.

Bringing people together and building coalitions has defined my personal life and my public service. While my career began in the private sector, over the past year, I have had an incredible opportunity in Washington to participate in this administration's humanitarian and diplomatic processes. As a member of the Holocaust Board, I have worked to preserve memories, defend human dignity, and confront hatred. Guided by my faith, I have built partnerships that are grounded in shared principles.

At the State Department, serving at the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, I have worked alongside dedicated Foreign Service Officers and civil servants committed to advancing American interests through principled engagement. During my tenure as Interim Permanent Representative and Chief of Staff at the Mission, I saw firsthand the importance of disciplined coordination, interagency collaboration, and accountability in translating policy into results. I also had the opportunity to build working relationships with diplomats from across the Western Hemisphere, reinforcing my belief that strong alliances are sustained through consistent engagement and institutional trust.

In many respects, the Philippines connects regions. Its ties span centuries and reflect the breadth of American engagement and influence across both the Pacific and the Western Hemisphere. Present-day partnerships in commerce, defense, education, entertainment, and cuisine demonstrate how longstanding exchanges have matured into the multifaceted power and cooperation we enjoy today. And as this year's Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines will play an elevated role in promoting our shared interests among the United States and all of Southeast Asia.

If confirmed, I will carry forward that spirit of partnership to Embassy Manila, relying on the expertise of our embassy staff, our colleagues at the Department of War, our allies and partners, ASEAN counterparts, and other representatives from the region who work to support an open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific. My goal will be to deepen U.S.–Philippine security cooperation, strengthen supply chains, advance the Luzon Economic Corridor initiative, and promote fair and transparent trade through close and continuing engagements with this Committee, the U.S. Interagency, and our Philippine Allies.

In closing, I would like to assure you that I approach this nomination with humility and seriousness, and with an unwavering resolve to uphold our ironclad alliance with the Philippines, including our shared commitments under the Mutual Defense Treaty, as well as advance the safety, strength, and prosperity of the United States at a time of great consequence in the Indo-Pacific.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.