

Opening Statement of Mr. Jared Novelly
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand, the Independent State of
Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
March 5, 2026

Thank you Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as United States Ambassador to New Zealand, the Independent State of Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue.

What may be lost on many of us in the private sector is the level of dedication that can be witnessed by those in government. During the lead up to this hearing, I have been exposed to a number of wonderful, bright, and dedicated people in the State Department, and I can honestly tell you that I have been incredibly impressed by the almost selfless determination that I have witnessed.

I wish to express my admiration for all of those who have helped me by thanking them for their service.

So too must I express my admiration for all of the Members of this Committee for your service as well. If confirmed, I hope to, at least, match the dedication to the American people manifested by each of you Members of this committee.

Thank you for your service and I look forward to serving our country with a similar zeal that I have witnessed.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work tirelessly to advance President Trump's and Secretary Rubio's foreign policies.

In advancing the President's agenda, we have few better partners than New Zealand. The government of New Zealand consistently supports our goals in the region and beyond.

If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to take our relationship to new heights. Specifically, I intend to focus on three priorities:

1. partnering with New Zealand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Niue to promote a free and open Pacific;
2. expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand; and
3. promoting opportunities for U.S. business entities.

Few countries understand the darkening security environment in the Pacific better than New Zealand. Last February, China conducted live-fire exercises in the

Tasman Sea. I was in the region at the time, and it was very concerning. The exercises led to flight diversions and represented an example of alarming, even destabilizing behavior in the Pacific.

If confirmed, I would prioritize expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand.

I know the critical role our Embassies and Consulates play in ensuring a fair playing field for U.S. entities. Whether it be through tearing down trade barriers or opening new markets, all U.S. businesses will have a friend in the Ambassador's office if I am confirmed.

In Samoa in recent years, the government in Apia has adopted a prudent approach to managing relations with the West and China, taking on foreign debt with caution. If confirmed, I would encourage the government in Samoa to continue this approach and ensure it is never pressured into a deal that would compromise its sovereignty.

In the Cook Islands, establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 2023 enabled us to take our longstanding relationship to the next level. If confirmed, I would expand our collaboration with local authorities to promote the responsible development of seabed mineral resources. The Cook Islands' EEZ contains possibly the largest cobalt deposit in the world – a key component in batteries and high-strength alloys. A strong partnership with the Cook Islands means a strong supply chain of critical minerals. This is good for all parties.

In Niue, I would likewise focus on strengthening our bilateral relationship. We have, and under my watch will continue to, closely engage with Niue on economic, cultural, and other programs. I hope to continue to grow this relationship.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.