

NOMINATIONS

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, Barrasso, Scott, Cornyn, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, and Booker.

Senator RISCH. The Committee on Foreign Relations will come to order.

I will start with, as usual, welcoming everyone in our audience to be here today and watch this open hearing. But as usual, there will be zero tolerance for interruptions. I have gone into that in detail on several occasions. Anybody who is thinking about it probably knows what is going to happen to them, so I am not going to take that any further.

We have three very important noms to hear today. And before we get started, I think the way we will do this is we have some people who want to do some introductions. Then myself and the ranking member will make opening statements. Then we will hear from each of the nominees for about 5 minutes, and we will open it up to a round of question, and even a second round if people are interested.

So at any rate, that is where we are. And we will start with Senator Ricketts.

Did you wish to make an introduction?

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It is my distinct honor to introduce my friend and colleague and the nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr. Brian Burch. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to his family.

When I first met Brian over a decade ago, he had six kids. Now he has got nine kids and a grandchild, to boot. He and his wife, Sara, live in suburban Chicago. And as we have talked about often, these roles are never done alone. Whoever their loved one is that is serving our country needs the support of their family to be able to do the job. And behind every great public servant there is that family supporting him. And I know that Brian is deeply grateful for his family.

Our connection goes back to actually the launch of a nationally acclaimed documentary series called "Catholicism" by Bishop Robert Barron, bishop of Rochester, Minnesota. The series promotes

the beauty and truth of Catholicism, and was watched by millions of Americans.

We connected over the hope that more people would come to know the beauty and appreciate the gift of our shared faith, something Mr. Burch has worked on for over two decades, to be able to share that and to advocate for Catholicism in the realm of politics, education, and media.

He is also, not surprisingly, a Cubs fan. I recall being with him on a balcony overlooking Wrigley Field after Game 5, in 2016, which was a turning point in that game that led to the championship for the Chicago Cubs. Mr. Burch shares that competitive spirit. He is also a dedicated champion of the poor, the vulnerable, and preborn babies.

He has been a man of great integrity, with a passion for truth, justice, and patriotism. He firmly believes in the tenets of the Catholic faith, and particularly a concept that we have called the common good.

We live in a time when the world's most determined adversaries are expanding their influence, seeking to challenge our values in every region of the world. Now more than ever, we need principled, capable leaders who can represent our nation with moral clarity, conviction, and purpose. Brian Burch is that man.

The post for which he has been nominated to serve can easily be misunderstood or underestimated. Lest we forget, it was the Ambassador to the Holy See that helped facilitate the relationship between Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II, that ultimately led to the downfall of the Soviet Union.

This relationship between the Holy See and the United States is no less important today. The sovereign state, which includes the Vatican, may be small in size, but it continues to help advance the foreign policy interests of the United States around the globe. The global reach and moral witness of the Holy See makes this post not just important for what happens in the Vatican or in Europe, but around the entire world.

Brian's deep commitment to the Catholic faith, unwavering patriotism, and a record of leadership make him an ideal candidate for this post. He is a leader who understands the contours of the Holy See, Catholic social teaching, and the priorities of the United States. Brian's ability to bring people together around shared values and a common person is a quality that will serve him well and our nation in this ambassadorial role.

As an ambassador to the Holy See, Brian will represent not only American interests but the spirit of dialogue, mutual respect, and cooperation that defines the very long standing relationship the United States has had with the Vatican. It is a role that demands diplomatic skill and a profound understanding of the Catholic Church's global mission.

I have every confidence that Brian Burch will carry out these responsibilities with honor, humility, and a steadfast commitment to strengthening the relationship between the United States and the Holy See.

Brian, in a world where we are facing increasing moral and geopolitical challenges, your voice, your vision, your values are needed now more than ever. I look forward to supporting your nomination.

I cannot think of a better person to represent the United States to the Holy See than you, Brian, and I urge my colleagues to support you, as well. You will be a fantastic ambassador for the United States. I could not be happier that you are the nominee, and again, I strongly encourage all my colleagues to support you, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Ricketts.

Senator Scott, I understand you have an introduction.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of this committee.

It is an honor to sit before you today to introduce a fellow Floridian, Nicole McGraw, to this committee. Ms. McGraw brings with her today her proud husband, Mike. Their son, Reuben, just helped the great University of Florida win the NCAA championship last night over the Houston Cougars. I look forward to receiving from Senator Cruz Texas barbecue, Shiner beer, Blue Bell ice cream, and look forward to watching him proudly wear the jersey Gator. Go Gators.

Nicole is a Florida native, born and raised in Miami. She has built an impressive business career in the art industry, driving innovation and economic development. She brings with her the values of teamwork and service that define the very best of American leadership. She has founded a nonprofit that raised millions in South Florida to support public art in education. Her work has created jobs, attracted tourism, and strengthened communities, all of which directly translate to the role of an ambassador, particularly in Croatia.

She has a clear vision for deepening for U.S.-Croatia relations through economic development, cultural exchange, and strategic cooperation. She combines a business acumen with a heart for service and a commitment to our nation's values. When confirmed, she will be a tireless advocate for American interests, our trusted partners and allies, and a powerful symbol of dynamic principled leadership on the world stage.

Together with President Trump and Secretary Rubio, I am confident she will restore peace through strength and stand for America's best interests.

You have my full support, and I urge my colleagues to advance your nomination quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations on your nomination.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, thank you for holding this hearing upon the nomination of my good friend, Brandon Judd, to be the next Ambassador to Chile. It is good to see Brandon in a coat and tie instead of the uniform of a United States Border Patrol agent, which he has been for many, many years, until his recent retirement.

I have known Brandon for more than a decade as not only a Border Patrol agent but as a president of the National Border Patrol Council. Brandon has been a great resource for me and for many of us in the Senate as we have traveled to the border over the years to witness firsthand the very real difficulties that our Border

Patrol agents face day in and day out. Of course, on the national level, we have all become acutely aware of the challenges our Border Patrol agents face, particularly in recent years.

But Brandon has been in the game for a long time, nearly three decades, and when he gives me and others policy advice and tell us what works and what doesn't work, we listen. And it comes from those decades of seasoned experience on the front lines.

The thing I like about Brandon especially is he focuses not on rhetoric but on results and on solutions. He started his career as a field agent back in 1997, and he has become a well known and highly regarded expert. He was chosen by his peers, no small thing, to be their representative as president of the National Border Patrol Council from 2013 to 2024. And throughout the years of service, he led the Border Patrol union with effectiveness and dignity while upholding the rule of law.

His expertise has been sought out by many elected officials, not just in the legislative branch but from the executive branch and others, as well. He has worked directly with the first Trump administration in 2019, to develop the very successful border policies that brought illegal immigration down to 45 year lows. After so many decades in the service of the United States, I can't think of a more deserved promotion than to serve as our nation's Ambassador to Chile.

I told Brandon earlier that my daughter spent 6 months in Chile, studying, many years ago, and we had a chance to visit. It is a beautiful country with great potential, and I know Brandon will work hard to improve our already good relationships with that country.

But having seen the consequences of our foreign policy play out here at home at the border, Brandon has a deep appreciation for how the geopolitical and economic dynamics at play affect Americans' daily lives. This will serve him well in his new role.

It is my honor to enthusiastically support his nomination, and I hope after his testimony today the committee will, as well.

Thank you again, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and other members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to introduce my good friend, Brandon Judd.

And Brandon, thanks for your willingness to continue to serve our country in this new capacity.

The good news for all of the nominees is usually when there are controversial nominees all of these seats are full, so you should be glad that they are not all full today. But that is no indication of our lack of enthusiasm and support for your service to the country. It just means that we all have about three different things and three different places we need to be at the same time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Cornyn, and thank you for that in depth observation and astute view of the situation.

Mr. Judd, Senator Cruz was also coming to introduce you today, but he does have, as Senator Cornyn indicated, prior commitments, like all of us do usually, triple booked. He has asked me to make a few remarks on his behalf, which I am going to read from his text as an introduction, and the full extent of it will be included in the record.

“Serving as the United States ambassador requires a deep understanding of America’s interests, and I have no doubt Brandon is the right person for the job and will serve our nation well. Some of you may recognize Brandon because he has appeared before Congress on 19 separate occasions, to offer recommendations and testimony on how to make our country more secure. He has consulted numerous Members of Congress, Governors, administration officials on how the unique roles can influence border policy and promote national security. Notably, his work with the first Trump administration contributed to a 45 year low in illegal immigration crossings in 2019.

“Now he has been asked to represent the United States abroad. It is clear that his credentials distinguish him as a leader and a policy expert. But his willingness to serve, and his deep love of country make him qualified to represent America’s interests on a global platform.

“Members of the committee, Brandon is the right person to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Chile. He is one of the strongest and clearest advocates for securing our nation that we have ever seen. He is an incredible patriot who loves our country, and I encourage my colleagues to support his nomination.”

Thank you, Senator Cruz.

So with that I will put his remarks also in the record.

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Ted Cruz,
U.S. Senator From Texas**

Good morning, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee. It is an honor to be with you today to introduce President Trump’s nominee to serve as the Ambassador to Chile and my good friend, Brandon Judd.

Ambassadors are selected to represent our government’s interests at the highest diplomatic level and foster relations with foreign countries. Serving as a United States Ambassador requires a deep understanding of America’s interests, and I have no doubt Brandon is the right person for the job and will serve our nation well.

Brandon began his career as a Border Patrol Agent in 1997 and was later selected as a Special Operations Mountain Team Leader in Naco, Arizona—one of the busiest border crossings in the United States. He also served as an instructor at the Border Patrol Academy and was unanimously elected by his peers to represent them as President of the National Border Patrol Council, a position from which he recently retired from in 2024.

Some of you may recognize Brandon because he has appeared before Congress on 19 separate occasions to offer recommendations and testimony on how to make our country more secure. He has consulted numerous Members of Congress, Governors, and administration officials on how their unique roles can influence border policy and promote national security. Notably, his work with the first Trump administration contributed to a 45-year low in illegal immigration crossings in 2019.

Brandon is a well-known and highly respected leader who has dedicated his life to making our country safe. His fluency in Spanish and nearly three decades of decorated leadership and instruction have made him a true expert in border and national security.

Now, he has been asked to represent the United States abroad. It’s clear that his credentials distinguish him as a leader and policy expert, but his willingness to serve and his deep love of country make him qualified to represent America’s interests on a global platform.

Members of the committee, Brandon is the right person to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Chile. He’s one of the strongest and clearest advocates for securing our nation that we have ever seen. He is an incredible patriot who loves our country and I encourage my colleagues to support his nomination. Thank you.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,
CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. We will move on now to a brief opening statement by myself and Senator Shaheen, and then we will hear from the witnesses.

So I am going to start, Mr. Burch, with you. As you know, the voice of the Pope has wide impact around the world. As Ambassador to the Holy See, you will keep a direct line between the United States and the Vatican and Pope Francis' leadership. The U.S., with our devout Catholic population, has an important relationship with the Holy See, and I am eager to discuss how you will lead this important and unique U.S. diplomatic mission.

The good news for you is you probably won't be wrestling with the tariff questions like most of the nominees are that are going out to these various countries. In most places that is really at the top of the list right now. I doubt it is there with the Vatican. But you will do well there, I am sure.

Ms. McGraw, if confirmed, you will be assuming a post in a country that is a critical U.S. partner at what is, needless to say, a turbulent time for Eastern Europe. As Ambassador to Croatia, you will be responsible for advancing efforts toward peace and stability in the Western Balkans which is key to U.S. and global security.

Croatia is the newest member of the European Union and a NATO member. In these roles, the U.S. should encourage Croatia to partner with other European nations and serve as a positive force in the region amid unrest in Serbia, a constitutional crisis in Bosnia, and unresolved disputes in Kosovo. I also hope you will urge Croatia to meet its 2 percent defense commitments to NATO, which will certainly be an important part of your work to improve the U.S.-Croatian relationship and secure our mutual interests in the region.

I have no doubt that my friend and colleague, who has a deep, deep interest in that part of the world, will have some good advice for you here today.

Mr. Judd, since you are an Idahoan, I know this is going to be an easy job for you. We Idahoans know how to step up. As you know, Chile is a strategic security and economic partner, whose democratic experiment has come under pressure from terrorist organizations tied to the Maduro regime in Venezuela, and Russian malign influence. Chile's wealth of mineral resources and strategic geographic location has also earned the country the attention of China, with heavy predatory Chinese investment in its infrastructure and energy sectors. To counter this influence, I hope that you will help strengthen ties with Chile to keep our hemisphere democratic, prosperous, and safe from international criminals and authoritarian governments.

I am grateful to you all for your willingness to serve our country abroad in these challenging times. President Trump, the members of this committee, and most importantly, the American people are counting on your leadership.

Thank you all, and now I will turn to Senator Shaheen.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Chairman Risch.

Welcome to all of the nominees this morning. To your families and friends and supporters who are here, also welcome.

Ms. McGraw, whether it was the breakup of Yugoslavia or the ethnic conflict that followed, the Western Balkans are a region of the world that far too often has been overlooked, both by Europe and by the United States, and as you heard from Chairman Risch, it is a region of the world that I have a lot of personal interest in. I have traveled to the region on a number of occasions. I have worked very hard to elevate the region's challenges and opportunities and to grow bipartisan support here in the Senate. And I know Senator Murphy and Senator Ricketts also have an interest in the Balkans.

I think it is critical that U.S. foreign policy does not repeat the mistakes of the past. When events arise on the ground in the Balkans, we must deal with them quickly and effectively. From combating Russian influence to maintaining support for Ukraine, as a NATO ally, Croatia is critical to these efforts. Croatia plays a uniquely important role in Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to both ethnic and political ties. And as an energy transit point, the entire region, including Croatia, will be vital if Europe is going to wean itself off Russian energy.

So, Ms. McGraw, I look forward to hearing your plans as you think about leading our mission to Croatia. I hope you will support the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, should you be confirmed, as well as paying attention to how Croatia is responding to the ethnic events in the country.

Mr. Burch, if you are confirmed you will be serving as the U.S. representative to the Vatican. On foreign policy, the Vatican often focuses on promoting peace and humanitarian efforts. The Trump administration has been decimating American foreign aid programs, including disease surveillance, disaster relief, and humanitarian aid. As Archbishop Gallagher, the Vatican's Foreign Minister, said, this is a, and I quote "very, very serious situation" with "bad effects" around the world.

One place where the cuts to humanitarian operations are having an impact is on Ukraine's front line. The Vatican recognizes this, and on the anniversary of Putin's invasion the Pope called the war in Ukraine a "painful and shameful occasion for all of humanity." I agree with that statement.

I have had a chance to visit Bucha, where Russian forces committed horrific war crimes, and it is an absolute shame for all of humanity. Mr. Burch, I would like to hear from you whether you share those concerns about the cuts to U.S. humanitarian assistance and how you will approach this post, should you be confirmed.

Mr. Judd, you have been nominated to Chile which has been a strong U.S. partner both in the Western Hemisphere as well as in its support for Ukraine. In January, Chile's parliament passed a resolution condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine and endorsing President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, and the Chilean government has worked with Ukraine to elevate the plan to bring back home the Ukrainian children abducted by Russia.

In addition, with Chile's critical mineral and lithium deposits, it is an important American ally in our efforts to combat the rise of China's influence. I am concerned that President Trump's tariffs across Latin America and against Chile will have unintended consequences, pushing friendly governments to hedge their bets with the United States and explore closer ties with China. And so Mr. Judd, if confirmed, I would like to hear how you will work to deepen the ties between the United States and Chile.

I look forward to hearing from all our nominees today.

Thank you all for your willingness to continue to serve the country.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

We will now hear from our nominees, and if you would kindly hold it to about 5 minutes. If you have a lengthier statement we will be happy to include it in the record of the hearing today.

So with that we will start with Mr. Burch.

STATEMENT OF BRIAN BURCH, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE HOLY SEE

Mr. BURCH. Good morning. Thank you.

Chairman, ranking member, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am deeply honored and humbled to be nominated by President Trump to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Holy See. This is a role of great significance, and I am grateful for the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. I appreciate the chance to discuss how I will contribute to strengthening the relationship between our nation and the Holy See.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt prayers and well wishes on behalf of all Americans to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for a full and swift recovery from his recent illness.

I would like to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Sara, whose unwavering support and love has been my anchor through this journey, and to our nine beautiful children, including my daughter in law and my first grandchild, who remind me every day of how blessed I am. My school aged children were given the day off today to watch their dad on TV. I hope to make them proud. Their love and encouragement remind me of the importance of the work that we do, and of the profound gift of life and family. I am deeply grateful.

I was born and grew up in Phoenix, Arizona. I attended Catholic schools, and spent my summers from the age of 12 working alongside migrant workers on a relative's farm, harvesting produce and learning the value of hard work.

My family is the story of the American dream. My mom and dad married early age and started with nothing but the only thing that matters—their faith and love. My father taught me that America was the greatest country in the world, and to never take for granted our freedom. Last summer I lost my father to cancer at the early age of 69. I know he is looking down on me this morning, and smiling. You were right, Dad. In America, anything is possible, including the possibility that his son could be nominated by the

President of the United States to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See.

As the president of CatholicVote, and for the last 25 years, I have dedicated my life to helping advance principles and policies aimed at building a civilization of love, a culture of life, and the conditions necessary for broad human flourishing.

My work has sought to incorporate the timeless teachings of my Catholic faith, including the truths of the human person and the common good, and to faithfully apply them to the public life of our nation. These efforts reflect the values of faith, family, and authentic freedom, values that resonate deeply with both the Catholic Church and the United States. My work has involved engaging voters, legislators, and faith leaders, and to give Catholics a voice in the debates that shape the future of our country. These experiences have honed my ability to navigate complex issues and to build consensus, and to cultivate relationships built on human decency, competency, and trust, skills I believe are essential for effective diplomacy.

The relationship between the United States and the Holy See is both unique and vital. It transcends traditional diplomacy, rooted instead in our shared commitments to religious freedom, human dignity, global peace, and justice. The Holy See, as the governing body of the Catholic Church, plays a critical and influential role in international affairs. We can and we must continue our strong partnership, while advancing our mutual interests in addressing an array of global challenges, including working to resolve war and conflict in multiple regions around the world, religious persecution, the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable, the scourge of human trafficking, and the defense and promotion of human dignity and prosperity.

If confirmed, my primary goal will be to deepen this partnership. The moral witness of the Holy See, together with its global influence, make it a key partner for an array of U.S. interests. I am confident we can contribute to a more just and peaceful world, reflecting the best of American values and the Holy See's mission.

Let me also assure this committee that I fully understand the distinction between advocacy and diplomacy. As ambassador, my sole responsibility will be to represent the interests of the United States. I am committed to listening, learning, and engaging with all stakeholders to ensure our policies serve our nation and its partners effectively.

In closing, I am profoundly dedicated to serving my country and enhancing the critical relationship between the United States and the Holy See. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee, the Administration, and our counterparts at the Vatican to achieve our shared objectives.

Thank you for considering my nomination, and I welcome any questions you may have.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Question. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from the Department of State available to the Committee and designated staff when invited?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador to the Holy See, I commit to make myself available to this Committee and designated staff when invited.

Question. Do you commit to keep this Committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Answer. I commit to keeping the Committee fully and promptly informed about all activities under my purview, if confirmed.

Question. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, as appropriate.

Question. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff?

Answer. I commit to responding promptly to briefing and information requests from the Committee and its designated staff.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burch follows:]

Prepared Statement of Brian Burch

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I was born and grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, attended Catholic schools, and spent my summers from the age of 12 working alongside migrant workers on a relatives farm, harvesting produce and learning the value of hard work. My family is the story of the American dream. My dad and mom married at an early age and started with nothing but the only thing that matters—their Faith and love. My father taught me that America was the greatest country in the world, and to never take for granted the gift of our freedom. Last summer I lost my father to cancer at the early age of 69. I know he is looking down on me this morning, and smiling. He was right. In America, anything is possible, including the possibility that his son could be nominated by the President of the United States to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See.

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Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Burch.

Mr. Judd, you found that a trip here to DC is a long trip from Idaho. I go home every weekend, and I have found that going to Europe is about 2 hours quicker than it is going to Idaho. But Chile isn't very close either, so we will look forward to your service there.

We would like to hear from you.

STATEMENT OF BRANDON JUDD, OF IDAHO, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE

Mr. JUDD. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished committee members, it is an honor to be here with you today. I am grateful to be nominated for the position of U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Chile by President Trump, and grateful to Secretary Rubio for his support and the Department of State's support throughout this process.

With your concurrence and approval, I look forward to beginning my work in Chile and continuing my service to the people of the United States of America. I appreciate the opportunities I have had to meet with many of you to discuss our bilateral relationship with Chile. We are at a crucial juncture in that relationship, so I approach the opportunity to serve as ambassador with the utmost seriousness, humility, and a clear sense of purpose. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our dialogue on our shared national priorities—promoting safety, strength, and prosperity.

I want to thank my spouse, who is here today, she is my sweetheart, love of my life, and best friend. And I want to thank my children for their unwavering support. I also want to express my gratitude for the generations of my family who came before me and set the example for me. They truly loved and served their country.

My maternal grandfather served in the United States Army during World War II and fought in Europe. My father was drafted into the military in 1969, during the Vietnam war. After completing his tour, he joined ROTC at Arizona State University, graduated, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 2004.

My mother supported my father throughout numerous relocations every 2 to 3 years. Though she could not establish a stable career or long term home, she maintained her commitment to her family and country.

These examples influenced who my four brothers and I became. Each of us have a firm belief and commitment to service to our country, family, faith, and community. Two of my brothers served

in the United States military, one followed me into the United States Border Patrol, and another served as a police officer in Benson, Arizona.

The U.S.-Chilean diplomatic relationship spans more than 200 years. The foundation of our relationship is our commitment to democracy. We also share a belief in the individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These common beliefs create a deep solidarity between Americans and Chileans. I saw this every day during my time living in Chile in the 1990s, serving as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It informs the way we see each other and it informs the way we see the world. It strengthens our diplomatic ties and drives us to work together to call out violations of democratic rights in the Western Hemisphere, from Maduro's illegitimate regime in Venezuela to the Ortega-Murillo dynastic dictatorship in Nicaragua.

As neighbors, the United States and Chile also share a common commitment to keeping our hemisphere and our citizens safe from harm. Chile is experiencing a historic rise in violent crime as transnational criminal organizations exploit vulnerable populations and infiltrate porous borders across the Western Hemisphere. As an American, I recognize this challenge.

As a career Border Patrol agent, I have dedicated my working life to safeguarding borders and protecting my fellow citizens. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Chile, that is the ethos and the experience that I would bring to the job. I would make it a cornerstone of my ambassadorship to work with Chile to deepen our ability to work together in curbing illegal immigration, combating violent criminal organizations, and enhancing border security in support of this Administration's priorities.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of this committee, our relationship with Chile has a direct impact on the safety, security, and prosperity of the American people. That is why I am so excited at the prospect of serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Chile, if you choose to give me the opportunity to do so.

Thank you very much for your time today. I look forward to answering your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Question. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from the Department of State available to the Committee and designated staff when invited?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you commit to keep this Committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff?

Answer. Yes.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Judd follows:]

Prepared Statement of Brandon Judd

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Committee Members, it is an honor to be here with you today.

I am grateful to be nominated for the position of U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Chile by President Trump, and grateful to Secretary Rubio for his support and the Department of State's support throughout this process. With your concurrence and approval, I look forward to beginning my work in Chile and continuing my service to the people of the United States of America.

I appreciate the opportunities I've had to meet with many of you to discuss our bilateral relationship with Chile. We are at a crucial juncture in that relationship, so I approach this opportunity to serve as Ambassador with the utmost seriousness, humility, and a clear sense of purpose. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our dialogue on our shared national priorities—promoting safety, strength, and prosperity.

I want to thank my spouse, who is here today, she is my sweetheart, love of my life and best friend, and my children for their unwavering support. I also want to express gratitude for the generations of my family who came before me and set the example for me. They truly loved and served their country.

My maternal grandfather served in the United States Army during World War II and fought in Europe. My father was drafted into the military in 1969 during the Vietnam War. After completing his tour, he joined ROTC at Arizona State University, graduated, and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2004.

My mother supported my father throughout numerous relocations every 2 to 3 years. Though she couldn't establish a stable career or long-term home, she maintained her commitment to her family and country.

These examples influenced who my four brothers and I became. Each of us have a firm belief and commitment to service to our country, family, faith, and community. Two of my brothers served in the United States military, one followed me into the United States Border Patrol, and another served as a police officer in Benson, Arizona.

The U.S.-Chilean diplomatic relationship spans more than 200 years. The foundation of our relationship is our commitment to democracy. We also share a belief in the individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These common beliefs create a deep solidarity between Americans and Chileans. I saw this every day during my time living in Chile in the 1990s. It informs the way we see each other and it informs the way we see the world. It strengthens our diplomatic ties and drives us to work together to call out violations of democratic rights in the Western Hemisphere, from Maduro's illegitimate regime in Venezuela to the Ortega-Murillo dynastic dictatorship in Nicaragua.

As neighbors, the United States and Chile also share a common commitment to keeping our hemisphere and our citizens safe from harm. Chile is experiencing a historic rise in violent crime as transnational criminal organizations exploit vulnerable populations and infiltrate porous borders across the Western Hemisphere. As an American, I recognize this challenge. As a career border patrol agent, I have dedicated my working life to safeguarding borders and protecting my fellow citizens. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Chile, that is the ethos and the experience that I would bring to the job. I would make it a cornerstone of my Ambassadorship to work with Chile to deepen our ability to work together in curbing illegal immigration, combating violent criminal organizations, and enhancing border security in support of this Administration's priorities.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of this committee, our relationship with Chile has a direct impact on the safety, security, and prosperity of the American people. That is why I am so excited at the prospect of serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Chile, if you choose to give me the opportunity to do so. Thank you very much for your time today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Judd.
Ms. McGraw.

STATEMENT OF NICOLE MCGRAW, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Ms. MCGRAW. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Croatia. I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence in me, and to the members and the staff of this committee for your time and consideration. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to strengthening the U.S.-Croatia relationship.

I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Mike, and our children for their unwavering love and support. I also want to thank my parents for their guidance and encouragement.

Founding CANVAS Art Charities ignited my passion for public service by demonstrating how cultural diplomacy and data driven public art can transform cities, drive economic growth, promote tourism, foster cultural education, and build vibrant communities. This experience taught me the importance of collaboration, strategic vision, and international engagement, skills directly applicable to diplomacy. My work in bridging art, business, community development inspired me to expand my impact in a global scale, using these same principles to strengthen U.S.-Croatia relations throughout economic partnerships and advanced shared security interests as a U.S. ambassador.

The role of the U.S. Ambassador in Croatia is to represent the United States, facilitate peace and economic opportunities, and counter malign influence, responsibilities that align seamlessly with my career in leadership, business development, and cultural engagement. Founding CANVAS Art Charities required me to navigate complex stakeholders, secure funding, and lead citywide cultural initiatives through public-private partnerships that drove economic growth.

Similarly, I led a team to build new technology on the blockchain for commerce, which championed innovation in the art market. I applied my entrepreneurial mindset to advance emerging technology and identify investment opportunities.

If confirmed, I will apply these skills to strengthen U.S.-Croatia relations, ensuring the U.S. Embassy operates effectively and efficiently to advance our shared economic security and cultural interests.

I would lead the U.S. mission in Croatia focusing on four priorities: economic and cultural diplomacy, security cooperation, American excellence, and protecting American citizens abroad. My goal is to make America stronger by expanding our alliances, countering adversarial influence, and ensuring our values are reflected in strategic sectors, like Croatian ports, telecommunications, and energy. I will advocate for transparent investment practices, promote American leadership in the region.

To make America safer, I will deepen security collaborations with Croatia, a proud NATO ally. With Croatia increasing its defense

budget, modernizing infrastructure, and developing new capabilities from cybersecurity to ammunition manufacturing, this is a timely opportunity for the U.S. defense companies to partner on joint ventures and technology transfers, ensuring NATO interoperability and regional stability.

To make America prosperous, I will champion U.S. investment in Croatia's critical sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and technology. The Krk LNG terminal expansion offers a chance to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas while boosting American energy exports. I will also support U.S. tech firms entering Croatia's growing digital market, fostering innovation, creating high skilled jobs, and cementing Croatia's status as a European tech hub.

And finally, I will make America excellent by highlighting our cultural leadership, fostering person to person relationships through education, the arts, and sports. From showcasing American creativity to spotlighting our competitive spirit, cultural and commercial exchange will be key tools of diplomacy.

Through these efforts we will reinforce America's reputation for innovation, freedom, and opportunity. If confirmed by the members of this committee and the full Senate, I will take the responsibility of being an ambassador at this critical moment in history with integrity, honor, friendship, and strength. I am committed to advancing U.S. interests and supporting our allies and deepening the enduring bond between the United States and Croatia.

I look forward to your questions, and I hope to earn your support today.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Question. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from the Department of State available to the Committee and designated staff when invited?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia, I commit to appear before this Committee when invited.

Question. Do you commit to keep this Committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to keeping the Committee fully and promptly informed about all activities under my purview.

Question. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer. I commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, if confirmed, and as appropriate.

Question. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to responding swiftly to briefing and information requests from the Committee and its designated staff.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McGraw follows:]

Prepared Statement of Nicole McGraw

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence in me and to the Members and staff of this committee for your time and consideration. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to strengthen the U.S.-Croatia relationship.

I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Mike, and our children—Katie, Jane, Mikey, Henry, and Elizabeth—for their unwavering love and support. I also want to thank my parents for their unconditional love, guidance, and encouragement.

Founding CANVAS Art Charities ignited my passion for public service by demonstrating the power of cultural diplomacy to transform cities across South Florida through public art, fostering economic growth, and enriching a thriving community through cultural exchange. Through CANVAS, I worked with cities and stakeholders to create public art that fostered cultural education, promoted tourism, and produced data-driven results. This experience taught me the importance of collaboration, strategic vision, and international engagement—skills directly applicable to diplomacy. My work in bridging art, business, and community development inspired me to expand my impact on a global scale; using these same principles to strengthen U.S.-Croatia relations through economic partnerships will advance shared security interests as a U.S. Ambassador.

If confirmed, I would have no higher priority than the safety and security of American citizens in Croatia.

In addition to protecting Americans, the role of the U.S. Ambassador in Croatia is to represent the United States, facilitate peace and economic opportunities, and counter malign influence—responsibilities that align seamlessly with my career in leadership, business development, and cultural engagement. Founding CANVAS Art Charities required me to navigate complex stakeholder relationships, secure funding, and manage large-scale cultural initiatives across multiple cities, all while fostering public-private partnerships to drive economic growth.

Similarly, leading Jupiter NFT positioned me at the forefront of emerging technology, where I identified investment opportunities; we built international platforms for commerce using blockchain technology, which championed innovation in the art market—Key skills in advancing U.S. economic diplomacy. These experiences have honed my ability to build coalitions, negotiate with diverse stakeholders, and implement strategic initiatives that deliver tangible results. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will apply these skills to strengthen U.S.-Croatia relations, ensuring the U.S. Embassy operates efficiently and effectively to advance our shared economic, security, and cultural interests.

If confirmed, I will lead the U.S. mission in Croatia with a focus on four priorities: economic and cultural diplomacy, security cooperation, American Excellence and protecting American citizens abroad.

My goal is to Make America Stronger—by expanding our alliances, countering adversarial influence. I will work with Croatia to resist economic coercion from malign foreign actors, particularly China. This will include supporting Croatia's efforts to enact rigorous investment screening and public procurement mechanisms to ensure it uses trusted vendors for critical infrastructure, like ports and telecommunications.

To Make America Safer, I will deepen security collaboration with Croatia, a proud NATO ally. Croatia is one of 23 countries meeting the minimum threshold for NATO defense spending, but Croatia needs to go well beyond 2 percent to modernize its armed forces to overcome present security challenges. With Croatia increasing its defense budget, modernizing infrastructure, and developing new capabilities—from cybersecurity to ammunition manufacturing—there is a timely opportunity for U.S. defense companies to partner on joint ventures and technology transfers, ensuring NATO interoperability and regional stability.

If confirmed, I will also support Croatia's ongoing efforts to resolve longstanding disputes with its neighbors and encourage the Croatian government to continue its advocacy for stability and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of the Western Balkans.

To Make America Prosperous, I will champion U.S. investment in Croatia's critical sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and technology. The Krk [KURK] LNG terminal expansion offers a chance to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas while boosting American energy exports. I will also support U.S. tech firms entering Croatia's growing digital market, fostering innovation, creating high-skilled jobs for Americans, and helping Croatia emerge as a European tech hub.

And finally, I will Make America Excellent by elevating our cultural leadership along with diplomacy, through sports. From showcasing American creativity to spotlighting our entrepreneurial spirit, cultural and commercial exchange will be key tools of diplomacy. Through these efforts, we'll reinforce America's reputation for innovation, freedom, and opportunity.

In this mission, I am committed to advancing U.S. interests, supporting our allies, and deepening the enduring bond between the United States and Croatia.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. Thank you very much, Ms. McGraw.

We are going to now proceed to a round of 5 minute questions, and I would like to start with you, Mr. Burch, and get your ideas on something that we see, on this committee, and I see even more so, I think, on the Intelligence Committee, and that is the tremendous amount of animosity toward Christians around the world. Most Americans do not understand what a minority we are as Christians in other parts of the world. There is a lot of pushback against Christians, and just discrimination and outright violence, some of which we have seen recently in Syria.

Your thoughts on that and how we can engage the church, the Catholic Church, more in the pushback on this prejudice against Christians.

Mr. BURCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your question. It is an honor again to be with you this morning, and I understand from your staff you, too, are a practicing Catholic, so I am grateful to be here with you.

The question you ask is very important, because the Holy See and the United States actually share a deep concern for the persecution of religious minorities, and particularly Christians around the world. This is occurring, as you point out, not just in isolated places but in many regions, most especially and acutely in the Middle East, where since the 1970s, the Christian population has decreased by 75 percent, primarily through immigration but also through religious persecution. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has referred to this as a form of genocide.

This, of course, is not just limited to the Middle East. There are parts of Africa, certainly Latin America, places like Nicaragua, where the church is jailing and persecuting priests and bishops.

The Holy See is an extremely important partner in addressing this, and it is one of the chief areas that I believe we have real commonality. The Holy See, of course, has nunciatures and relationships with over 180 countries around the world, and it has relationships that the United States relies upon to address this very question.

And should I be confirmed, I look forward to working with the Holy See on this and addressing the issue that you just raised.

Senator RISCH. Well, I appreciate that. And again, like I said, most Americans really do not have a good feel for how difficult it is for a Christian in a lot of parts of the world. Thank you for acknowledging my Catholic faith. The gentleman on your right acknowledged his LDS faith, and about 26 percent of Idaho is LDS. Indeed, until the last election I was the only non-LDS member of our congressional delegation.

And I think probably the relationship between the LDS church and the Catholic church is really demonstrative of the relationship that all religions have in America. There is no place in the world where there are more religions practiced than here in the United States of America, and done so not violently and side by side with great respect for each side.

Indeed, whenever we judge a country, particularly we have had this experience with Syria right now, what we are looking for is religious tolerance. That will tell you something, and a lot, about that country and how successful it is going to be in human rights, de-

mocracy, and everything else. So thank you for that, and I hope you will work at it.

Mr. Judd, right now I think, again, most people are not fully aware of the fact of how aggressive the Chinese are as far as their infiltration of our southern neighbors. And you are going to be dealing with one of the places where they are making great efforts, in Chile. I wonder if you could give us your thoughts on that, how you are going to deal with that.

Mr. JUDD. Thank you, Chairman. I appreciate that question, and I look forward to taking the time to answer that question fully.

I have never had the opportunity to meet you, but as a new Idahoan it is a beautiful State, and the people there are some of the nicest that I have ever encountered. So it is great to be in a State that you are the leader of.

Senator, one of my biggest concerns is what we are currently seeing from China as it pertains to South America. China sees South America as a soft landing spot. They recognize and they understand that the United States does not have the same type of infrastructure in South America as what we do in, say, in Europe or the Indo-Pacific. They recognize that because of this they can try to exert their influence in South America.

One thing that I love about Chile is that they are one of the strongest democracies in that region. They recognize and understand that it is important to strengthen their citizens' civil rights. President Boric should be commended for calling out his partners in the region for their civil rights abuses, in Venezuela and Nicaragua.

We can work with the Chilean people. We can strengthen those ties with the Chilean government because we have an awful lot more to offer Chile than what China does. We have a lot better economic ties than what China does. We have more foreign direct investment in Chile than what China does. We partner with Chile in Antarctica. We partner with Chile in astronomy and astrophysics. We partner with Chile in developing investment opportunities for U.S. businesses. And as we continue to strengthen those ties, we will see the partnership with Chile and the United States continue to grow.

I look forward to, if confirmed as President Trump's nominee, to working with Chile, to strengthening those relationships with the United States and the Chilean government.

Senator RISCH. Thanks much. Well said, and I think those observations are good. What I find in dealing with these other countries is as aggressive as China is, they still want to deal with us. They recognize us as being what we are, democratic and strong believer in human rights. And countries appreciate that and know that our rule of law is part of the glue that holds us together.

Ms. McGraw, I am going to turn you over to Senator Shaheen, who is going to have some questions for you, I am, sure, in that region. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and yes, actually, of course I do have some questions for Ms. McGraw, because Croatia does play an important role in stabilizing the Western Balkans, particularly Bosnia Herzegovina, where Bosnian Croats represent one of the three constituent peoples in the country.

Previous Administrations have provided assistance to Bosnia's energy sector to work toward the completion of a gas interconnector that would link Bosnia's gas infrastructure with Croatia's, which, if completed, would break Bosnia's total dependence on Russian gas. It would make Croatia a regional leader, and it would provide an easy pathway for U.S. liquified natural gas to reach the Western Balkans.

The holdup, and the reason I am focusing on Bosnia here, is because the holdup has been the Bosnian Croat leader, Dragan Covic, who has actively blocked this effort at every move, attempting to leverage the project to increase his own personal power.

So if confirmed, will you engage with the Croatian government to prioritize the completion of this pipeline and to put pressure on Covic to agree to the project?

Ms. MCGRAW. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

Yes, if I am confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, I will make sure that I engage with the embassy in Sarajevo and Ambassador Murphy there as well as my Croatian counterparts. It is extremely important that we continue to work on trying to get that southern interconnection built. Not only will it advance more energy from U.S. exporters to the region, but since the Krk LNG terminal is going to double its capacity, it will position Croatia as a leader in the Balkans to be able to then become an energy exporter and deter the Russians from continuing to be the only one that supplies gas in the region.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I appreciate your knowledge of the project. And will you also commit to calling for U.S. sanctions for Covic if he continues to block the completion of this project?

Ms. MCGRAW. Thank you, Senator.

I have not been updated on the sanctions yet since I am a private citizen, but if confirmed, I will definitely look into finding out more about that and getting back to you to work with Congress and to work with you specifically on that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great. Thanks very much.

Mr. Burch, when the Trump administration began to shut down foreign assistance programs globally, Caritas, the charitable arm of the Catholic Church, stated, and I quote, "Stopping USAID abruptly will kill millions of people and condemn hundreds of millions more to lives of dehumanizing poverty. This is an inhumane affront to people's God given human dignity that will cause immense suffering," end quote.

So if confirmed, Mr. Burch, how will you reassure the Holy See that the United States really is committed to saving the lives of those in need and to preventing suffering around the world?

Mr. BURCH. Thank you, Senator.

I am not surprised this question came up. I know this is going to be a very challenging issue for myself in this role because of the Holy See's pattern and record of leadership when it comes to humanitarian causes and humanitarian assistance.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you agree with that leadership?

Mr. BURCH. Absolutely. I think the Holy See, in fact, has been an exceptional partner for the United States. In fact, some of the NGOs that perform work are some of the best, some of the lowest

costs of overhead and some of the most effective and most impactful programs.

Senator SHAHEEN. So how do you explain, then, how will you explain the U.S. position? Because it seems to me to be totally opposed to what the Holy See has advocated for.

Mr. BURCH. Yes. This is going to be a challenge, because I think the President—and I fully support the President and the Secretary—have addressed a long overdue problem within some of our foreign aid, which is millions, if not billions, of our dollars have been going to places around the world that are not aligned with United States interests. And the Secretary has made clear, when he took office, that he was recharting and refocusing our foreign aid on places that would make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. And I think those criteria have to be met by these places.

Of course, again, I think the partnership with the Holy See can be a very good one, but I think those partners have to understand that our foreign aid is not endless, that we cannot fund every last program—

Senator SHAHEEN. Are you aware of how much we spend on foreign aid a year, foreign assistance, or how much we did until Elon Musk came in and cut the program?

Mr. BURCH. I am not aware of the exact number, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. It is about 1 percent of the entire Federal budget. So if you were going to name three places where you think that foreign assistance has not been in keeping with our foreign policy, where would you name?

Mr. BURCH. You know, I have read some of the stories about some of the places that our money has been spent, particularly on some transgender mice experiments—

Senator SHAHEEN. Let me just correct you. That is not the case. That has been interesting and has been used time and again as the reason that Mr. Musk has cut foreign assistance. But those just are not accurate.

Mr. BURCH. Senator, I understand there is going to be disagreements over whether or not certain places deserve or don't deserve some of our dollars.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right. But we should be able to agree on the facts.

Mr. BURCH. Well, absolutely. So I don't doubt that most Americans agree that some of our money has been misspent in places, that we haven't spent our foreign aid perfectly, and that every single grant we make is perfectly aligned with United States interests. This is why I compliment the President and the Secretary. I compliment them for having the courage to take seriously the dollars the taxpayers invest in our country, and that we spend, around the world to make sure that they are aligned with United States interests. And this is going to be a process.

I understand the Secretary is continuing to review a lot of these grants. I have actually spoken with some of the Catholic Relief Services groups that are working and the recipients of these grants. I understand some of them have recently been reauthorized. Others, of course, are still pending.

So I think this is a process that is still under review inside the State Department, and I look forward to working on this issue.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

I am out of time. I Have some more questions, Mr. Chairman, for the next round.

Senator RISCH. We will come back, if that is all right.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Right now our adversaries are hard at work to expand their influence in every region. The Holy See is no exception. In 2018, the Vatican signed a provisional agreement to accept bishops appointed by Communist China, not the Vatican. Pope Francis has categorized the Vatican-China deal as diplomacy in the art of what is possible. I categorize this as being very dangerous. It sets a precedent for future relations with an adversarial nation. Xi Jinping has given the green light to construct state approved, state controlled Catholic churches. This has severe implications for Catholics globally.

Additionally, I fear this encourages Communist China in its persecution of religious minorities and provides moral legitimacy for a repressive regime.

In October, the Vatican just extended that agreement for the third time, for 4 more years, defying a request from the first Trump administration to end that agreement.

Mr. Burch, do you agree that the agreement represents a dangerous level of cooperation between the Catholic Church and Communist China?

Mr. BURCH. Well, thank you, Senator. Again, thank you for that kind introduction at the beginning.

I agree that the relationship between the Holy See and China is of immense importance to the United States. As you point out, they did sign a provisional agreement in 2018, that they then renewed in 2024, that is primarily concerned with the appointment of bishops. This agreement is secret, so we do not know the contents of this agreement.

Because it is restricted to only the appointment of bishops, I think it is important for the Holy See to maintain a posture of pressure and of applying pressure to the Chinese government around their human rights abuses, particularly their persecution of religious minorities, including Catholics.

When it comes to the question of the appointment of bishops, I would encourage the Holy See, as the United States Ambassador, if I am confirmed, to resist the idea that a foreign government has any role whatsoever in choosing the leadership of a private religious institution. I do not believe the church should cede or surrender to any government, China or otherwise, the selection of their bishops, and I would hope and work with the Holy See to present that and to make that case, assist in that case with the Chinese.

The other piece of this is as important with respect to China. The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan. That is one of only 12 states to do so, and it is the only European state to maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. I understand this to be extremely important because, of course, China's ambitions with

Taiwan will likely be tempered by the posture of the rest of the world. And the Holy See, in maintaining this relationship with Taiwan, I think will serve as a point of hesitation, a resistance, given the Holy See's moral authority and moral respect and global influence around the world. And I will insist, as the United States Ambassador, if I am confirmed, the Holy See maintain that strong relationship with Taiwan.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Burch.

One of the things I want to get back to a little bit and talk about the aid, because you mentioned that the Catholic Church is responsible for aid being distributed around the world, and I think it is one of the partners that works for the U.S. Government. Isn't that right, through Catholic Relief Services and Caritas?

Mr. BURCH. That is correct.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes. And so, again, having been a prior donor to Catholic Relief Services, you mentioned how effective they are. I think their administrative and overhead costs are less than 5 percent typically. Is that your understanding?

Mr. BURCH. That is my understanding, yes.

Senator RICKETTS. So when the State Department is reviewing some of the ways that we are providing our foreign aid, some of the things—and maybe this is where the ranking member and I need to sit down and kind of go over the facts—some of the stuff that has been referenced is transgender operas in Peru, I believe, also voter turnout in India, DEI programs, and other programs.

My guess would be, and maybe you are more familiar with this, which is why I am asking, that when it comes to the Catholic Church, what CRS does or Caritas does, they are focusing primarily on the type of aid that is lifesaving. It is not involved with transgender promotion. It is not involved in voter turnout. It is not involved in DEI. Would that be your understanding of the kind of aid that the Catholic Church, the CRS, and Caritas does?

Mr. BURCH. That is my understanding. It is primarily focused on humanitarian aid, like disaster relief in Myanmar, for example, which I understand that grant was recently reauthorized. And then there is the human services side, which, of course, involved a lot of different things that, at times, can or cannot be in the United States' interests.

To the ranking member's question, I think this is where it becomes difficult because you have to make choices as the United States. Can we continue to fund any and all of these programs, or do we have to be selective? And if we are going to be selective, what are the criteria we are going to use? And I fully support the President and the Secretary making sure that the dollars we spend, the money that the taxpayers pay into the Federal Government, are aligned with the United States interests and will make us safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Senator RICKETTS. And so, but getting to the point of the aid, it would seem that the Catholic Church's interest in providing aid really does align more with the types of aid of this Administration with regard to those lifesaving services. Does that seem accurate?

Mr. BURCH. I would agree. I think the Catholic Church can be one of the best partners of the United States.

Senator RICKETTS. Great.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you, Chairman.

First, congratulations to each of you. Being an ambassador is a fabulous job. You can do a lot of good things.

First, thank you to each of you for you're fully committed to President Trump's agenda, representing America's best interests around the globe.

Mr. Burch, the Holy See has long been outspoken on a variety of global human rights issue, and I have appreciated the church help. They have been very helpful, especially with some dissidents in Cuba, and I am very appreciative of that.

Unfortunately, I do not see the same urgency from the Vatican leadership regarding the innocent civilians, including Americans still being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza. What do you think you can do as ambassador to encourage more engagement on the hostages in Gaza by the Vatican leadership?

Mr. BURCH. Thank for this question, Senator.

As you know, this issue is of immense importance to the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Even in his recent illness in the hospital he reportedly was making daily calls to a parish in Gaza that was holding Christian and Muslim minorities.

The Vatican has been very clear. They have called for a peace, for an end to the violence, to a two state solution. This, as I understand it, is one of the top priorities of the Holy See at this time. Of course, the United States is very interested in the same thing, and to the President's credit, he is working diligently to craft a peace solution.

The Holy See can play, in my opinion, a very significant role in assisting in that, by again, to your point, the moral witness of the church in places around the world, including in the Middle East, to be a partner in that conversation and to deliver the necessary moral urgency of ending this conflict and hopefully securing a durable peace.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Judd, Chile has increased its economic and technological engagement with Communist China, especially in mining and infrastructure. How would you balance promoting U.S. investment and democratic values while competing with growing Chinese influence in the region?

Mr. JUDD. Senator, thank you very much for that question. This is a very important issue. It is a very important issue for the Trump administration, when we look at how they are trying to expand trade across the globe.

We have to look at where we can strategically place investments, such as in salt flats. Chile just opened up to bidding salt flats in the area. We have a great company out of North Carolina, Albemarle, who currently mines in Chile.

My concern is that 71 percent of lithium that was mined in Chile went to China last year. So we need to look for ways that we can further our investments, open up business opportunities for companies here in the United States to go into Chile.

But it goes beyond just that. We recognize that the ties that we have with Chile are so much stronger than what China does, and if we can show Chile how we are the better partner, prove to them that just because something costs less right now, it becomes exponentially more expensive than what it does by doing partnership with the United States.

We are the better trade partner. We are the better partner in everything, whether it is Antarctica, fisheries, marine conservation, in all of the areas that is very important to Chile, and also in our foreign direct investment. China is a blip on the map when it comes to foreign direct investment, whereas we are the second largest source of foreign direct investment.

We need to continue to build on what we already have, and as we build on that we will continue to strengthen our ties with Chile and limit China's access to all of the resources that Chile might have available.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Ms. McGraw, given Croatia's efforts to diversify energy sources through its LNG terminal, how can the U.S. further support Croatia's energy independence and reduce reliance on Russian gas throughout the region?

Ms. MCGRAW. Thank you for that question, Senator. It was great to meet you in your office the other day and talk about our shared [inaudible]. Right now, in Croatia, the KRK LNG terminal is doubling its capacity, which is going to give the United States energy suppliers an opportunity to export even more liquified natural gas, which will really help cement Croatia's status as the regional energy hub. At that point, not only will they be able to supply the entire country with energy, they will also be able to be an exporter, which will deter the Russians and stop the Russian dependence on gas in the region.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you very much.

Senator Shaheen has a few more questions.

But before we do, I think, Mr. Burch, the question Senator Shaheen raised is one I find interesting, and that is she asked you how you are going to explain what we are doing with our foreign aid right now. And it has amazed me since I have been in this job how other countries treat the United States like the rich uncle. There are 8 billion people on the planet, and we are less than 5 percent of that. And yet every time there is a problem, they turn to us, and not always, certainly not always, but occasionally believe that somehow we have an obligation to resolve every one of these issues.

Look, out of the 8 billion people we deal every day with countries where the people need food, they need shelter, they need medicine, they need education, they need either one or all of these things. I mean, what we do really can't come close to meeting the needs.

One of the things we never hear about, which is amazing to me, one of the most difficult places on the planet right now is the Horn of Africa. And we are hearing very little about the Horn of Africa. And when you see what is going on there and compare it what is going on in Gaza, I mean, the Horn of Africa is significantly worse.

So anyway, it is your obligation to explain how we allocate what is really a very limited resource for all the difficulties that are out there in the world. So I appreciate your thoughts. I heard what you said about that, and I appreciate your understanding of the matter. And I agree. I agree with Senator Shaheen. I agree with you. This is a really difficult needle to thread.

So thank you very much.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you.

I would just like to point out, give the opposing view a little bit. While I agree with Chairman Risch that resources are limited, our investments in foreign assistance have been in the interest of U.S. national security. When we saved more than 26 million people because of the PEPFAR program, that is a benefit to the United States. And now that that program has been shut down pretty much—despite what has been reported, it has really ground to a halt—China is coming in, and it is trying to pick that up.

So if we are going to win this competition with the People's Republic of China, then we have got to recognize that we need to use all of the tools in our toolbox. It is not just the military. We need to use foreign assistance and development programs. We need to use our diplomacy. It doesn't help us when we don't have diplomats on the ground.

And China is increasing its investment in diplomacy. It is increasing its investment in development assistance and humanitarian assistance at a time when the United States is pulling back. That does not help us in this global competition with China.

And Mr. Judd, one of the reasons I put up this poster is because I serve—I don't know if you can see it, but I serve on the Armed Services Committee, as well. And this is a little out of date. It is a couple of years old. But it makes the point pretty much. Everything you see in red, and we are happy to make a copy of this and share it with you, those countries are all members of the Belt and Road Initiative, along with Chile. The ones—Paraguay, Surinam, the few that you see that are sort of in the tan color, those are not members of the Belt and Road Initiative that China is doing.

And I have to say, it is a little out of date because thanks to Secretary Rubio, he helped persuade Panama to no longer be part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which was a positive step.

But that shows the challenge we have got in Latin America. And it has not gotten better since this map was done. It has gotten worse, with the exception of Panama. And you can't see it but there is an installation, which I am sure you are aware of, in Chile, that is designed to, we believe, address space surveillance, just like there is one in Argentina.

So China is increasing its influence throughout Latin America, throughout Africa, throughout the world, at a time when the United States is pulling back, and that is not in our security interest.

Mr. Judd, you pointed out that Chile has a strong record of democracy and standing for human rights, including against Venezuela. If confirmed, you will likely serve during an important presidential election in Chile. What do you view as the appropriate role of a U.S. ambassador during an election year, and will you commit

to avoiding any perception of what might be construed as election interference in the form of voicing support for one candidate or party over another?

Mr. JUDD. Ranking Member Shaheen, I really appreciate that question, and I appreciate that chart that you are showing there. You are clearly illustrating the challenges that, if confirmed, I will have. But I am up to that challenge. I am up to meeting that challenge if you give me that opportunity.

As it pertains to foreign elections, we don't want countries coming into the United States to influence our elections, and we have no part in influencing another country's election. That is for the Chilean people to decide. And I will be there to support the Chilean people in trying to make better their democracy, and trying to help their people get better jobs, make better lives for themselves. That is what my role as the ambassador is, not to influence foreign elections.

So yes, I do commit to you that I will not, in any way, try to influence an election in the country of Chile.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thanks very much. I appreciate that.

And I would just like to correct, Mr. Burch, your comment about Myanmar, because while the President has pledged \$2 million to address the tragedy there because of the earthquake, that money hasn't been disbursed yet because we don't have the foreign assistance capacity to do that, because that has been shut down. And in fact, the three person assessment team that went from State to assess the damage there was fired while they were on the ground.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, and thank you to all three of you for your willingness to serve, and thank you for appearing here and giving us the benefit of your thoughts.

Before closing, I will state that any letters of support the committee has received for any of the nominees will be added to the record.

I will also note for the information of members of the committee, the record will remain open until close of business tomorrow, April 9, including for members to submit questions for the record.

If you are fortunate enough to get one of those, please get it in as quickly as possible, because your movement through the process will be slowed if we don't get those answers. So if you will do that we would appreciate it.

Thank you to the ranking member. And with that the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:14 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRIAN BURCH BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Ukraine

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to meeting with and hearing from representatives of Caritas Internationalis, as well as to sharing the accounts they have from frontline communities in Ukraine and around the world with your colleagues in Washington?

Answer. Caritas Internationalis is the second-largest humanitarian aid organization in the world. If confirmed as Ambassador to the Holy See, I commit to engaging with Caritas and other Catholic faith-based organizations and update Washington with information relevant to America's national interest.

Foreign Assistance

Question. Do you believe that PEPFAR funding should be fully restored and full staffing of these programs resumed?

Answer. I fully support President Trump's efforts to conduct a thorough review of all foreign assistance to ensure it makes America safer, stronger, or more prosperous. The Vatican is deeply engaged in supporting the needs of at-risk populations, and if confirmed, I will engage the Vatican on ways to address critical global health needs.

Question. Do you support the use of U.S. foreign assistance to provide maternal and child health activities?

Answer. The Vatican is dedicated to supporting families and vulnerable populations, in particular through maternal and child health activities. If confirmed, I will engage the Vatican on global health and humanitarian efforts. As Secretary Rubio has stated, our core national interest is the guiding mission of American foreign policy. I fully support the President's efforts to ensure foreign assistance makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Question. Do you support the use of U.S. foreign assistance to respond to violence against women and girls?

Answer. Protecting families and human dignity is at the center of the Vatican's work. If confirmed, I will foster a dialogue with the Vatican to identify ways to address violence against women and girls, including efforts to end the scourge of human trafficking. As Secretary Rubio has stated, our core national interest is the guiding mission of American foreign policy. I fully support the President's efforts to ensure foreign assistance makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Question. Would you consider cuts to U.S. foreign assistance to the poor and needy around the world in line with the principles of the Catholic church?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has stated, our core national interest is the guiding mission of American foreign policy. I fully support the President's efforts to ensure foreign assistance makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Question. Will you share with the Administration the Vatican's views on migrants and refugees; humanitarian assistance; and healthcare for needy and at-risk populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to sharing with the Administration the Vatican's views on issues such as migrants and refugees; humanitarian assistance; and healthcare for needy and at-risk populations.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRIAN BURCH BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Last year, the Vatican extended for 4 years a non-public agreement with the Chinese government which is believed to allow for some degree of joint selection between the Vatican and the Chinese government of Catholic bishops in the PRC. Human rights organizations view the agreement as detrimental to religious freedom, and even within the Vatican it has been criticized as a "bad deal."

Question. What is your position on this agreement, and if confirmed, how will you engage with the Holy See to advance religious freedom in China?

Answer. China continues to repress Catholics, particularly clergy and laypersons who refuse state control of religion. If confirmed, I would encourage the Holy See to speak out publicly against China's human rights violations and abuses, including against Catholics in China.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRANDON JUDD BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Science & Space Cooperation

In October 2024, Chile signed the Artemis Accords, making them part of the international coalition the United States has assembled to return to the Moon and create a sustained presence. In addition to developing the technologies needed to go on to Mars, the moon mission must happen in President Trump's term or else the Chinese Communist Party will beat us there and build the first moonbase.

Question. Please discuss the role of Chile in science and astronomy cooperation.

Answer. The United States and Chile have a long and rich history of cooperation in science and astronomy. The U.S. National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy have invested more than \$1 billion in astronomy and astrophysics observatories in Chile. The U.S.-provided Dark Energy Camera at Chile's Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory is helping scientists understand the expansion of the universe, while the U.S.-backed Vera C. Rubin Observatory will employ the largest digital camera ever built to capture more data about the cosmos than any other observatory in history. These facilities reflect the strength of U.S.-Chilean scientific cooperation and deliver results that will benefit America.

Question. Evaluate for this Committee what concerns you have that China would seek to build partnerships with Chile on issues related to science and specifically space, and what effect that would have on U.S. leadership in space.

Answer. First, I'm worried about transparency. China has a track record of establishing observatories in other countries, but then denying access to scientists and host government officials who believed they had established legitimate partnerships. Second, I worry that China might use astronomical facilities as a cover for military activities. Consequently, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for scientific and space partnerships that are built on transparency and peaceful purposes. Given America's history of successful scientific partnerships in Chile, I know that is a model the United States is ready and willing to continue pursuing.

Critical Minerals

China is actively advancing their presence, influence, and investments across South America. Chile is a key gateway to Antarctica, home to large quantities of rare earth minerals, and is where the Pacific Ocean meets the Atlantic Ocean. The geo-strategic importance of South America to American national security is growing and demands greater focus.

The United States remains highly vulnerable to disruptions of our supply lines of rare earth minerals. Chile itself is emerging as a potential leader in rare earth elements.

Question. Please assess the role that Chile can play in helping the U.S. bolster the security of rare earth element supply lines.

Answer. Deepening America's partnership with Chile on critical and rare earth mineral extraction and processing will be critical for pushing back on China's chokehold over these value chains. Chile is not only the world's top copper producer and the world's second largest lithium producer, it also has reserves of at least 30 other minerals that the U.S. Geological Survey designates as "critical" due to their use in advanced electronics, clean energy, and defense applications. Chile is already a long-standing commercial partner in the mining industry and U.S. companies are deeply invested in Chile's copper and lithium industry, so we have a history to build on as Chile's rare earth element sector expands. Moreover, the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement incentivizes trade between our countries, including trade in rare earth elements and other minerals. Chile wants to move up the value chain and add value to its rare earth and mineral exports. Chile stands to be a strong partner as we strengthen our own supply chains of important minerals and rare earth elements.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRANDON JUDD BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Career Officials

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to upholding protections for career foreign service employees—and all career Federal employees—working within Chile's embassy, regardless of political ideology?

Answer. Yes. I will evaluate all such employees based on merit, not political ideology.

Competition With China

Question. China is working to expand its influence throughout South America, including in Chile. For example, Chinese vessels are frequently engaged in illegal fishing activities around Chilean waters and China seeks to expand space cooperation with Chile. How should the U.S. better compete with China to partner with Chile on space issues?

Answer. The United States and Chile have a long and rich history of cooperation in science and astronomy. The U.S. National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy have invested more than \$1 billion in astronomy observatories in Chile. The U.S.-provided Dark Energy Camera at Chile's Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory is helping scientists understand the expansion of the universe, while the U.S.-backed Vera C. Rubin Observatory will employ the largest digital camera ever built to capture more data about the cosmos than any other observatory in history. These facilities reflect the strength of U.S.-Chilean scientific cooperation and deliver results that will benefit America.

Meanwhile, China has a track record of establishing space observatories in other countries but then denying access to scientists and host government officials who believed they had established legitimate partnerships. I also worry that China might use astronomical facilities as a cover for military activities. Consequently, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for scientific and space partnerships that are built on transparency and peaceful purposes. Given America's history of successful scientific partnerships in Chile, I know that is a model the United States is ready and willing to continue pursuing.

Question. Are you concerned about the threat posed by Chinese illegal fishing in South America, and how do you intend to increase cooperation with Chile on this issue?

Answer. Yes. Chile has one of the longest coastlines and one of the largest exclusive economic zones (EEZ) in the world and has long-standing concerns about illegal fishing in its waters. It has reported incursions by foreign fishing vessels into its EEZ, including Chinese-flagged vessels. As Ambassador, I would continue to build cooperation and information-sharing between the United States and Chile and encourage broader regional cooperation to combat illegal fishing.

Free Trade

Question. The United States and Chile have had a free trade agreement since 2003. What is your assessment about how the free trade agreement is working?

Answer. The United States has maintained a trade surplus with Chile for many years, and I believe the free trade agreement is working well. Chilean officials joined us in actively celebrating the twenty-year anniversary of the free trade agreement, underscoring the value Chile sees in its commercial relationship with the United States. There are still some pending trade concerns regarding Chile's regulatory framework and its continued presence on the Special 301 list regarding IPR protections, and I plan to build upon our strong relationship to make improvements in these areas.

Question. What are your priorities for strengthening economic relations with Chile?

Answer. I believe U.S. investment in crucial Chilean industries—such as critical minerals and telecommunications—serves our strategic interests and bolsters our commercial relationship. As such, my priority as Ambassador will be to facilitate investment by U.S. companies in these sectors—a win-win for the United States and Chile alike.

Democracy in Chile

Question. You served as a missionary in Chile at a time in which the country was transitioning away from an authoritarian government. What are your thoughts

about the Pinochet dictatorship and what did you learn from your time as a missionary in Chile?

Answer. I respect and admire Chileans' 1988 decision to transition to democratic elections to restore their longstanding democracy. What I learned from my time as a missionary is that Chileans are warm, open, and they—just like Americans—believe deeply in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRANDON JUDD BY SENATOR JOHN R. CURTIS

As you may know, Chile possesses some of the world's largest lithium reserves. Despite U.S. investments in lithium projects in Chile and throughout South America, China continues to have a strong hold on access to these and other critical minerals.

Building commercial partnerships in Chile will allow the much-needed development of the US supply chains for critical minerals that are not dependent on China.

Question. Do you commit to doing everything in your position as Ambassador to Chile to support US lithium companies developing projects in Chile?

Answer. Yes. The United States is a major player in the Chilean lithium industry, and I see tremendous potential to build on that solid foundation. If confirmed, I would seek to build a bridge between U.S. investors and opportunities in Chilean lithium. Albemarle, a U.S. company, is one of only two companies producing lithium in Chile and we should provide strong support to Albemarle's efforts to grow its business in Chile. I would focus on developing relationships with decisionmakers in the Chilean government and with U.S. companies investing in Chilean lithium or are interested to do so.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRANDON JUDD BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Chile is a critical partner in South America and one of the world's largest producers of copper and lithium. The PRC has announced significant investments in Chile's mining and other strategic sectors in recent years.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to engage with the Chilean government to increase our cooperation around minerals supply chains and to address the potential for concerning PRC influence in the sector?

Answer. Deepening the United States's partnership with Chile on critical and rare earth elements will be key to pushing back on China's chokehold over these value chains. Chile is not only the world's top copper producer and the world's second-largest lithium producer; it also has reserves of at least 30 other minerals that the U.S. Geological Survey designate as "critical" due to their use in advanced electronics, clean energy, and defense applications. Chile is already a long-standing commercial partner in the mining industry and U.S. companies are deeply invested in Chile's copper and lithium industry, so we have a history to build upon as Chile's rare-earth element sector expands. The United States is the second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Chile, due in large part to U.S. company investments in Chile's mining sector. Chile stands to be a strong partner as we strengthen our own supply chains of important minerals and rare-earth elements. If confirmed, I would focus on developing relationships with decisionmakers in the Chilean government and with American companies that are already investing in Chile or are interested to do so.

Question. What tools do we have to strengthen U.S. investments in this sector?

Answer. The long-standing relationship between U.S. companies and Chile, where decades of U.S. investment have drawn our business communities together, particularly in the critical and rare minerals sector, serves as an asset in this regard. Special Envoy for Latin America Mauricio Claver-Carone recently previewed América Crece 2.0, which will serve to catalyze private sector investment in the hemisphere. If confirmed, I would also prioritize working with colleagues across the U.S. interagency—such as the Department of Commerce and the EXIM Bank—to identify new

ways we can help U.S. companies find new opportunities in Chile's critical and rare earth mineral extraction and processing industries.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRANDON JUDD BY SENATOR JOHN CORNYN

Question. Chile possesses some of the world's largest lithium reserves but despite US investments in lithium projects in Chile and throughout South America, China continues to have a strong hold on access to these and other critical minerals. Building commercial partnerships in Chile will allow the much needed development of the US supply chains for critical minerals that are not dependent on China. What actions will you take as Ambassador to Chile to support US lithium companies developing projects in Chile?

Answer. The United States is a major player in Chile's lithium industry, and I see tremendous potential to build on that firm foundation. As Ambassador, I would seek to build a bridge between U.S. investors and opportunities in Chilean lithium. Albemarle, an American company, is one of only two companies producing lithium in Chile and we should provide strong support to them. I would focus on developing relationships with decisionmakers in the Chilean government and in the Chilean business community, while simultaneously engaging in extensive outreach with American companies that are already investing in Chilean lithium or are interested to do so, to protect our access to this critical mineral.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NICOLE MCGRAW BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Tax Treaty

Question. The United States and Croatia signed a comprehensive income tax treaty in December 2022, which has yet to enter into force. The understanding in Congress is that the Treasury Department hit roadblocks during informal consultations with some Senators and decided not to transmit the treaty for formal consideration until its passage was assured. If confirmed, you are likely to hear regularly from your Croatian interlocutors about this treaty. Do you believe it would be worthwhile to have it enter into force?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to making America more prosperous through our growing trade and investment relationship with Croatia. An avoidance of double taxation treaty with Croatia could incentivize further investment and trade between Croatia and the United States and support small business owners and U.S. taxpayers. I commit to engaging with the Treasury Department, U.S. stakeholders, and with Congress on the status of the tax treaty with Croatia, if confirmed.

Question. Will you commit to advocating for Treasury to transmit the treaty to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for formal consideration?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging the Treasury Department, other U.S. stakeholders, and Congress on the status of the tax treaty and advocating for a course of action that aligns with the President's goal of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

NATO

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Croatian government to ensure its defense spending plans are on track to finally meet and exceed its Wales Pledge commitments?

Answer. Croatia is currently meeting its Vilnius Pledge commitments by spending 2.03 percent of GDP on defense, and the Croatian government intends to raise that figure to 3 percent by 2030. However, Croatia must go well beyond that to meet current challenges and its NATO capability targets. If confirmed, I will urge Croatia to make progress toward spending 5 percent of GDP on defense and ensure the U.S. defense industry remains well positioned to supply Croatia's military with the modern equipment needed to keep our Alliance strong.

Question. If confirmed, how would you approach your role in an Allied capital?

Answer. If confirmed, I would engage frequently with Croatia on our shared defense concerns as NATO Allies. Croatia has been a NATO Ally since 2009 and has been an important part of the Alliance, helping preserve stability in the Western Balkans and beyond. I am also committed to deepening our defense cooperation with Croatia, if confirmed, and will support Croatia's continued efforts to modernize its armed forces to respond to current and emerging threats.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NICOLE MCGRAW BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

Restitution Commitments: For nearly two decades, successive Croatian governments have expressed a desire to address restitution for Holocaust-era property but without any corresponding action. Specifically, Croatia has failed to resolve the issue of heirless Jewish property, has not returned most Jewish communal property, and its private property restitution laws require Croatian citizenship, effectively excluding most Jewish claimants.

Question. If confirmed, will you encourage the Government of Croatia to uphold its restitution commitments, including by resuming high-level discussions with the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and passing legislation to comprehensively address the restitution of private property, including for foreign citizens of Croatian descent?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging the Croatian government on its restitution commitments under the Terezin Declaration to address personal and communal property claims, including those made by foreign citizens of Croatian origin. If confirmed, I also look forward to engaging the Croatian government to meaningfully connect with the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) on these issues and champion progress on other key restitution matters.

