

Opening Statement of Tilman Fertitta  
SFRC Nomination Hearing  
April 1, 2025

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee...it's an honor to be with you today.

My name is Tilman Fertitta, and I am President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Italy and San Marino.

For this opportunity, I am eternally grateful to President Trump, and I am honored, if confirmed, to represent all Americans in such an important role.

I am also thankful to the Senators I've been able to meet in advance of today, learning your thoughts on issues specific to Italy, the EU, and NATO - and most important, restoring the peace and prosperity that we enjoyed as a nation and as a world during President Trump's first term in office.

I'm also joined today by my wife Lauren and family.

When my ancestors immigrated to the United States from Italy at the turn of the last century, there is no way they could have envisioned the opportunities that would come to our family as a result of hard work and determination.

From my very first restaurant, I continued to grow, becoming a national leader in the industry, with more than 60 award-winning restaurant concepts such as Catch, Mastro's, Morton's, Del Frisco's, The Palm, Oceanaire, and many more.

We've also expanded into the hospitality, entertainment, and gaming industries, adding to our company's hotel portfolio 5-star hotels such as the Post Oak Hotel in Houston, and the Montage in Laguna Beach, as well as eight Golden Nugget Hotel and Casinos.

Today, through my restaurant and hospitality company, Landry's, we own nearly 600 properties in 36 states and 15 countries. We're also one of the largest employers in the nation, with more than 50,000 employees.

I'm also the proud owner of the Houston Rockets NBA basketball team, which is having a great breakout season and currently second in the Western Conference.

During my lifetime in business, I've taken two companies public, acquired six other public companies, and done over 40 major M & A transactions.

I also starred on the hit CNBC show "Billion Dollar Buyer," and I've appeared regularly as a financial expert on networks such as CNBC, Bloomberg and Fox Business, and I am the sole shareholder of one of the largest privately held companies in America today.

Along the way, I've been guided by a pair of important mantras.

First, “Know Your Numbers. Numbers Don’t Lie.” This is particularly relevant when addressing the United States’ \$44 billion trade deficit with Italy, which I’ll work closely with businesses to help close this gap.

And Second, “Don’t Ever Think That Your Position Is Too High To Teach Others. I Still Teach Every Single Day, And Just As Important, I *Learn* As Much As I Teach Others,” every day.

I’m currently serving my twelfth year as Chairman of the Board of Regents at the University of Houston system. In 2022, my family gave \$50 million to the University of Houston’s College of Medicine, naming the school the Tilman Fertitta College of Medicine, bringing in a new era of innovation for Houstonians.

In 2016, our family contributed \$20 million dollars to help fund the University of Houston Basketball arena to be named “The Fertitta Center,” and in the last six years, the Houston Cougars men’s basketball team has won more games than any other men’s college basketball team, including six consecutive Sweet 16 appearances in the NCAA tournament.

I also serve as Chairman of the Board for both Houston Children’s Charity and the Houston Police Foundation.

As a long supporter of law enforcement, we donated \$3 million in 2019 to help build a Tactical Training Center, helping the city’s officers and recruits with a state-of-the-art training center.

We’ve had the chance to visit Italy numerous times over the years, and I’ve long been an admirer of the country’s culture, food, fashion, and true patriotic spirit.

And no description of Italy would be complete without acknowledging the country’s important role in the history of Western Civilization, which has made it one of the most visited places in the world to this day.

The bond between our two countries is as strong as ever.

The country is led by a phenomenal Prime Minister in Giorgia Meloni.

More than 2,500 American companies do business in Italy on a daily basis, making Italy a key *economically*.

And the military and defense support we’ve received from the Italians over the decades has made Italy a key *strategic* ally.

If confirmed by members of this Committee and the full Senate -- Undertaking this responsibility of being an ambassador at this crucial moment in history will be the most important job of my life.

You have my commitment – and America has my commitment – to always represent the United States, and President Trump, with dignity, pride, friendship, and strength, and I hope I can earn your support today.

Thank you.