

Statement of Nicole McGraw
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Croatia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
April 08, 2025

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 two 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.