

**Statement of Michael Kavoukjian**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**May 20, 2026**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you as the nominee for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I am deeply grateful to President Trump for the trust he has placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to serve the American people with diligence, fortitude, and integrity in this important post.

I also want to thank my family; my former colleagues in the CIA; my partners at White & Case, my professional home for the last 40 years; and Senator Tom Cotton. I appreciate their support throughout this process. Thanks as well to my late parents, who made patriotism a core value in our home. And, finally, special thanks to my wife, Jana. I would not be in this position without her. She will be our best asset in Oslo if I am confirmed.

This nomination is especially meaningful to me as my mother was born in Norway, near the Lofoten Islands. My Norwegian-born uncle served in the OSS during World War II, working with the Norwegian Resistance. I was raised in Minnesota, home to more Americans of Norwegian ancestry than any other state and a center of Norwegian American culture. I was a competitive ski jumper in my youth. I am hopeful that this background will help me build strong relationships with our Norwegian allies. It also means that, if confirmed, our family will have gone from a rustic island farmhouse in a fjord north of the Arctic Circle to the Ambassador's Residence in Oslo in one generation. A quintessential American story, with some Nordic nuance.

If confirmed as Ambassador, my top priorities will be to (i) aid and protect U.S. citizens in Norway, including our Embassy staff; (ii) advance American security interests by building on our long tradition of military and intelligence cooperation with Norway; (iii) further strengthen our economic ties with Norway, especially in the area of critical minerals and energy to diversify the global supply chain; and (iv) build closer cultural connections between the American and Norwegian people

so that the bond of trust we have forged over the last two hundred years continues into the next generation.

As a founding member of NATO and the eyes and ears of the Alliance in the Arctic, Norway understands its commitment to our shared security. It is meeting NATO's enhanced defense spending targets. Indeed, it is now the first country in the history of the Alliance to spend more per capita on defense than the United States. Many of its upgraded systems are purchased from the United States. Norway's strategic location, its military capabilities, and its experience operating in extreme cold weather make it an indispensable security partner. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen cooperation with Norway on defense issues, with special attention to Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic that are opposed to our interests.

National security is inextricably linked to economic strength. I will therefore, if confirmed, work to increase business ties and trade between our two countries, especially in critical areas like rare earth elements. Norway's recent joining of the Pax Silica initiative is an important step in ensuring U.S. access to these resources. Norway also has a thriving energy sector that plays a vital role in global energy security, supplying 30% of Europe's oil and natural gas and reducing reliance on more problematic producers. Norway has the world's largest sovereign wealth fund valued at \$2 trillion, roughly half of which is invested in the U.S. I would welcome the opportunity to encourage more direct investment by Norwegian companies in the United States to create American jobs; and to reduce trade barriers so American firms can compete fairly in the Norwegian market.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to promote cross-cultural initiatives that bring the Norwegian and American people closer together. Norwegian immigrants have made enormous contributions to the United States, especially in the Upper Midwest. Roughly 5 million Americans have Norwegian ancestry. But as new generations grow more distant from their immigrant past, we must work to ensure the bond between our two great peoples remains strong. For example, if confirmed, I will seek to arrange for a Minnesota Vikings football game to be played in Oslo. Nothing could be more effective in inspiring Norwegian Americans to visit their ancestral homeland and form new ties with their Norwegian cousins.

I want to conclude with a quote from our former Secretary of State, George Schultz, on the most important lesson he learned from his many years on the world stage: “Trust is the coin of the realm. When trust was in the room...good things happened...Everything else is details.” Our relationship with Norway is built on a foundation of trust. That trust comes from a long history of working together, shared values, shared interests, and candor. If confirmed, I will continue that tradition of trust. With that foundation, I am confident that, as Secretary Schultz said, “good things will happen”.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.