

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch, Ricketts, McCormick, Barrasso, Cruz, Scott, Cornyn, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, and Rosen.

Senator R^{ISCH}. The U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will come to order.

Today, we have a hearing on five nominees of President Trump, and the way we are going to handle this, there are some introductions. When we are done with the introductions, then Senator Shaheen and I will give opening remarks. Each of you will be given about 5 minutes to speak, and then we are going to open it up to a round of questions.

And before we start, as a matter of course, we run a tight ship here. We have zero tolerance for protests or anybody who tries to communicate with either the committee or any of the people who are testifying here. I started the policy since I started that if you interrupt, you will be arrested immediately, and taken and booked, and those usual things, unfortunately. We have only had to do that a couple times, I guess, and that slowed it down considerably.

[Laughter.]

Senator R^{ISCH}. And we will continue to do that. In addition to that, you will be barred from the committee for a year.

So, we welcome the public here. We want the public here. It is an open meeting, but we got important business of the Senate to do, and we cannot do it if we got interruptions, so there are other places that that can take place.

So, with that, we will do some introductions.

Senator Cruz, how about you first?

STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, members of this committee. It is an honor today to introduce my good friend, Mindy Hildebrand, who is President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mindy is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, where she earned her Bachelor of Business Administration and was hon-

ored with a Presidential citation, one of the university's highest distinctions. Since then, she has become an accomplished entrepreneur, philanthropist, and community leader, whose work has made an impact, not only in my hometown of Houston, where she and her family reside, but all across Texas and across the country. She has served on numerous boards and advisory councils, including the MD Anderson Cancer Center, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of St. Thomas, the Memorial Park Conservancy, the Houston Parks Board, the Lifehouse Houston, the Partnership to End Addiction, Preservation Square, and the James Beard Foundation.

Currently, Mindy serves as vice chair of the Hildebrand Foundation, which invests in critical causes, such as cancer research, education, green space development, and faith based community support. She is also the president and the owner of River Oaks Donuts, something for which I can never forgive her because it has contributed far too many pounds to my waistline and that of my children. It is a small business based in Houston, founded in 2013, and I can easily say they serve some of the best donuts in the city of Houston.

As every Houstonian knows, we are proud of having the best rodeo in the world, so it is only fitting that Mindy has also served on the International Committee of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo for 37 years.

Her leadership experience spans from business to healthcare, from environmental conservation to culinary sustainability, and from education to addiction recovery. There are hardly any areas left that Mindy has not had some kind of involvement and experience in. These credentials alone reflect someone who is not only a successful business leader and philanthropist, but a deeply committed citizen, whose compassion and care for others is beyond reproach. Her work has garnered national and international respect, and her sense of civic duty and diplomacy is evident in all she does.

Knowing Mindy and her family for as long as I have is a privilege. She is a dear friend, and her friendship has meant a great deal to both Heidi and me personally. From our friendship, I have seen firsthand her unwavering patriotism, grit, courage, and care for others.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I cannot think of anyone more qualified, more prepared, more principled to represent the United States of America as Ambassador to Costa Rica, and I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support her nomination.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator PETERS, welcome to the committee.

Senator PETERS. Great to be here, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. You have the floor.

**STATEMENT OF HON. GARY C. PETERS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MICHIGAN**

Senator PETERS. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to join you today to introduce Mr. Bill Bazzi as the nominee to be the Ambassador of Tunisia. Mr. Bazzi is joined today by his wife, Nadia.

Nadia, thank you for being here today supporting Bill in this important endeavor.

I have had the opportunity to get to know Mr. Bazzi over the years, and I am confident that if he is confirmed, he is well positioned to represent the United States in Tunisia. His long history of service to his community and to his country showcase his commitment to public service.

Mr. Bazzi currently serves as the mayor of Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Prior to running for office, he served 21 years in the United States Marine Corps. Throughout that time, he regularly engaged with diplomats and country leaders to collaborate on the distribution of humanitarian assistance, defense training, and rebuilding critical infrastructure. This experience will serve him well in this new role, if confirmed.

In Michigan, he has been highly engaged with his community, not only in his role as mayor, but also through volunteer work to better the lives of young adults, veterans, senior citizens, and children, and he has done this work, not just in the State of Michigan. He was part of a State Department delegation to Tunisia, where he worked with other elected officials, including members of Parliament. So, Tunisia is not an unfamiliar place to Mr. Bazzi.

In 2021, Mr. Bazzi became the first Muslim mayor of Dearborn Heights, and although he faced many challenges throughout his tenure, from the COVID pandemic to severe floods in Ecorse Creek, he has remained steadfast in his commitment to finding solutions that work for his entire community. Mr. Bazzi has continually demonstrated his willingness to show up for his community and for his country, and while we may not agree on every issue, I am totally confident that he will take on this new role with the same level of commitment and integrity that he has taken on every assignment that has been given him.

So, thank you, Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen, for this opportunity to appear before you today, and thank you, Bill.

Thank you for your dedication to public service, and you have my full support in your nomination.

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you.

Senator PETERS. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Peters. We really appreciate that. I know you have got other things you have to do. You are welcome to stay, but understand you have got other things you are going to have to get done, so thanks so much for coming.

Senator Cornyn, I understand you have something for the good of the order.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN CORNYN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS**

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am also pleased to say a few nice words about our friend and fellow Texan, Mindy Hildebrand, President Trump's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica. As you have already heard, Ms. Hildebrand is a highly accomplished Texas businesswoman, civic leader, and devoted Longhorn. Sorry about the game weekend, but we will be better next time.

[Laughter.]

Senator CORNYN. And obviously a very—

Senator CRUZ. That really hurts.

Senator CORNYN [continuing]. Very generous philanthropist as well. She and her husband, Jeff, who is a good friend of Senator Cruz and I also, have been married more than 30 years and have 3 children. She currently serves as a vice chair of the Hildebrand Foundation and vice chair of Hilcorp, and as you have already heard, one of my favorite titles that she holds is president and owner of River Oaks Donuts, which Senator Cruz has already extolled.

But she is more than a businesswoman. She has demonstrated a record of using her talents to give back to the community and communities around her, and devoted time and resources toward philanthropy on numerous boards and committees, some of which you have already heard about, but that is not all. Mindy has decades of volunteer service to her name, giving her time to important causes across our great State. She has spent more than 3 decades serving on the International Committee of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, as you have heard. And one of my favorite attributes of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is the scholarships that they produce for deserving young people in our State. Through her own charitable foundation, the Hildebrand Foundation, she supports faith based organizations across Texas that provide for the poor and needy.

Her leadership skills in the business world, paired with her dedicated community involvement, both in Texas and across our country, make her an excellent candidate to continue to serve our country in this new capacity: representing the United States of America as Ambassador to Costa Rica. I am grateful to Mindy and her family, and particularly her husband, for their leadership and contributions to the State of Texas, and I look forward to seeing her leadership role now as the next Ambassador to Costa Rica that I am happy to support.

Congratulations, Mindy, on your nomination, and I look forward to voting for your confirmation.

Thank you.

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

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Senator. We appreciate that.

Today, the committee will consider the nomination of Melinda Hildebrand to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica, Bill Bazzi to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tunisia, Todd Wilcox to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security, Dan Negrea to be U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and Riley Barnes to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, important positions. So, with that, I would like to make a few remarks, and I will yield to the Ranking Member for some remarks of her own.

So, thank you to our witnesses today and their families for being here today and your willingness to serve. I am very glad that the

Senate is back in session, and we can resume our important work to pass President Trump's nominees as quickly as possible to get you in post as quickly as possible.

As you know, Ms. Hildebrand, Costa Rica is an important U.S. ally in addressing shared security concerns and counternarcotics efforts in our hemisphere. Secretary of State Rubio visited Costa Rica in February, signaling the importance of this relationship and need to work together to address Chinese malign influence in the country and Central America. As a business leader and philanthropist, you have the acumen to ensure that Costa Rica remains a strong partner of the United States, and I look forward to hearing your plans to do so.

Mr. Negrea, President Trump has made clear that it is time for reform at the U.N. Indeed, it is past time, and you will help lead the charge. You have a background in international organizations and financial institutions. This skill set will surely help you cut through the bureaucracy at the U.N. and work with your colleagues to provide value for the American people at the U.N. after our massive investments over the years, the return for which is difficult to find at times. As our representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, I know you will steer the Council away from woke ideologies and the so called "sustainable development goals," and instead advocate for reforms that enhance efficiency, eliminate un-American mandates, and prevent further waste, fraud, and abuse. We need to make the U.N. less of a burden to the American taxpayer and increase transparency and oversight. I look forward to your thoughts on these issues and your plans to reform the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Bazzi, as Ambassador to Tunisia, you will witness the growing pains of a fragile democracy and hold a seat of influence, representing the voice and values of the United States in Tunis. Tunisia is strategically located along the Mediterranean Sea and plays an increasingly important role in counterterrorism, immigration control, and freedom of navigation for international trade and commerce. While President Kais Saied once enjoyed overwhelming domestic support, Tunisians have recently taken to the streets to exercise the rights to free speech and protest. Amid this turbulence, we need to promote stability in the region to protect American interests. To this end, I introduced legislation last Congress to safeguard Tunisia's democratic institutions and checks and balances in the country. Stability is key, and I look forward to hearing your plans to work with the Tunisian government during this time of upheaval.

Mr. Wilcox, as Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, you will manage the officers who keep our posts abroad secure and allow our diplomats to advance America's interests abroad. As I have said from this dais dozens of times, we need our people in the field, not sitting behind desks. We need a Bureau of Diplomatic Security with an expeditionary mindset and a can do spirit to accomplish this. This was not the case during the previous Administration, and I will give you an example. When I was Ranking Member of this committee, the head of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security refused to give me information on a potential intelligence leak that I needed to do my job properly. And by the way, I was also senior

member of the Intelligence Committee on the Republican side at that time. Not only did he refuse this to me, he refused it to the Chairman of this committee. This was a shocking event that I know will not occur under your watch or under the leadership of Secretary Rubio. I look forward to hearing about how you will keep our diplomats safe and Congress informed during your time in office.

Mr. Barnes, President Trump has shown his commitment to internationally recognized rights through his many peace agreements and to work to end wars around the world. And Secretary Rubio has emphasized internationally recognized human rights in his bilateral and multilateral engagements, which is consistent with his excellent work during his time in the Senate and on this committee and the Intelligence Committee. As Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, you will not only need to keep up with the record pace of peace talks and engagement with world leaders, but also help the Secretary and the President further these aims and bring stability to the world. The United States has always been a leader in promoting and protecting internationally recognized human rights, and I look forward to learning how you will expand on this work.

Thank you again to all of our witnesses for being with us today. I look forward to our conversations today and to getting you confirmed, and to get to work as quickly as possible.

With that, Senator Shaheen.

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all of our nominees this morning. Thank you all for your willingness to serve this country, and welcome to your family and friends who are here supporting you.

From protecting our diplomats serving in dangerous posts, to standing up for human rights and civil society, to countering China in North Africa and Latin America, each of the posts that you have been nominated for is critical to America's foreign policy.

Mr. Wilcox, if confirmed, you will be running the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. This bureau, as you know, is charged with safeguarding all personnel who serve in American diplomatic missions, and that is no easy feat. That mission includes counterintelligence, counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and criminal investigations. On top of these responsibilities, the Administration has deployed diplomatic security agents to work alongside ICE. I would like to hear from you whether these reassignments are affecting our ability to protect our personnel serving overseas and the missions that diplomatic security is responsible for here at home.

Mr. Barnes, if confirmed to lead the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, you would take over an office that has long been at the vanguard of supporting independent media and civil society in places like Belarus, Georgia, Venezuela, and Tibet. Unfortunately, this Administration has terminated most of these programs and is considering further rescission cuts. It has gutted the annual human rights reports intended to hold countries' feet to the fire on democratic backsliding and violations of human rights.

If confirmed, I am interested in hearing how you will carry out your mission and what support human rights defenders can expect in these countries where they are now under attack.

Mr. Negrea, am I pronouncing your name correctly?

[Nonverbal response.]

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. As the nominee to the U.N. Economic and Social Council, your responsibilities also include important human rights work. China has been stepping up its efforts to assert influence at the United Nations, blocking nonprofit groups, and silencing human rights defenders. If confirmed, how will you work to limit China's reach while supporting voices from places like Xinjiang or Hong Kong that Beijing is trying to suppress?

And finally, Mr. Bazzi and Ms. Hildebrand, you have been nominated to serve as ambassadors in countries where China's influence is rapidly expanding. Tunisia was the only Arab Spring country to transition to a democracy, but today many young people increasingly see China as the partner of the future. Costa Rica faces similar dynamics as tariffs undermine economic ties and raise questions about whether the United States can be relied on as a dependable partner. At the same time, the Administration has cut rule of law and anticorruption programs in Costa Rica, which have benefited transnational organized crime groups. I hope you will both speak to your plans to counter China's increasing influence and strengthen democratic and legal institutions.

I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Cornyn, I recognize—you have a comment or an introduction. Is that correct?

Senator CORNYN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

It is always a pleasure to sing the praises of a former member of my staff, and today is no different. Plus, if you look down here at his family, how can you not say something about this crew? What a good looking group you have there, Riley.

It is my pleasure to introduce Riley Barnes, who is President Trump's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department. Throughout my time in the Senate, I have been fortunate to have a number of truly impressive speechwriters, and Riley is a star among their ranks, although I wish he had better material to work with.

The son of Uvalde, Texas, first came to my office as an intern back in 2008. In 2015, he returned as my speech writer, and while Riley's career in public service may have begun in my Senate office, it did not end there. After his service in my office, Riley went on to the State Department in the Office of Policy Planning, where he worked on both communications and policy roles. He then served as Senior Advisor to a former colleague of ours, Sam Brownback, who was then Ambassador at Large for International Religious Liberty, and in 2020, he became Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

In addition to his roles in government, Mr. Barnes was also Assistant Director of the Brent Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security at the Atlantic Council. And whether it is Uvalde, Texas, or

Washington, DC, he has always been involved in his community, and in particular his church here in town.

But there are two titles I know he cherishes more than any others, and that is father to his three children—Benjamin, Henry, and Mary Margaret—and husband to his wife, Katie. I am grateful for his willingness to continue to serve our country in this new capacity, and I have no doubt that Riley's background, experience, and character will serve him and our nation well in this new title.

So, I have had a chance to see firsthand his intelligence, his attention to detail, his integrity, and I cannot imagine anyone with better qualifications to serve in this important position.

Congratulations, Riley, and I look forward to supporting your nomination.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISC. Thank you very much, Senator Cornyn. We appreciate that, and now we will move to statements by the nominees, and Ms. Hildebrand, we will start with you.

STATEMENT OF MELINDA HILDEBRAND, OF TEXAS, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor to appear—

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISC. All right. Hang on just a second. Off to—

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISC. Off to jail.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISC. Officer, have you got somebody filming back there?

OFFICER. Pardon?

Senator RISC. Have you got somebody filming back there?

OFFICER. I believe she went out, sir.

Senator RISC. Well, please continue.

Ms. HILDEBRAND. It is an honor to appear before you as President Donald Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica. I am sincerely grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me. Thank you, Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, for your kind words, counsel, and encouragement throughout this process. We are fortunate to have you representing the great State of Texas in the Senate.

I would like to introduce you to my family who are joining me today: my husband of 36 years, Jeff, our children, Brittany and John Thomas, and Jeffery, who is watching back home in Texas. Also joining me are my mother, Pat Budinger, and sister, Michelle Maresh. I want to thank them for their support and confidence.

My faith is very important to me and to our family. My father was an ordained deacon in the Catholic Church and was a tremendous inspiration to me. I know he would be immensely proud of my nomination. If confirmed, I will be a praying ambassador, specifically praying for the President, for Americans that live, work, or

are visiting Costa Rica, for the residents of Costa Rica, and for God's grace and guidance as an ambassador.

Giving back and serving others has long been a priority for me and for our family. We traveled to Mexico and to Costa Rica, where we worked alongside property owners to build a home for their families.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. All right. Someone else anxious to go to jail.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. We do not usually have this happen here, but it happens, and we have not—

[Noise device.]

Senator RISCH. They have set off the noise device. I am going to take a break here while we while we—while get them out. We are going to take a short break with all the racket going on in the hall that is distracting.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. Let us take a short break, then we will come back in. Go at ease. Visit amongst yourselves.

[Recess.]

Senator RISCH. We will come to order.

Ms. Hildebrand, sorry about the interruption, what it is. Like I say, we do not get this very often, but be glad you are not going where they are going, so carry on.

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Thank you, Senator.

As vice president and now president of the Hildebrand Foundation, we have awarded grants totaling more than \$390 million to provide resources for higher education, medical services, parks, supporting those in need, combating addiction issues, and victims of sex trafficking in the Houston area. I also have had the privilege to serve on the boards of MD Anderson, the University of Texas at Austin, the Houston Parks Board, among others. My philanthropy has deepened my appreciation for responsible stewardship, accountability, and public service. In particular, my time at the Partnership to End Addiction and through prevention and education programs that I have helped to create not only reflect my strong passion to address addiction issues, but also has provided insight into the effects of drugs on our young people.

Last, for 36 years, I have served as a volunteer on the International Committee of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The committee hosts visitors from all over the world, including many from Central and South American countries, and provides a forum to promote American businesses and connect with foreign visitors. As a small business owner for over 12 years, I have a unique perspective of how important they are to our economy, and the challenges they face. I believe this experience and being a partner in building multiple larger businesses that employ over 6,000 hard-working Americans has prepared me to take on this role. If confirmed, I am committed to using these experiences and attributes as the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica to enhance the bilateral relationship to deliver America First wins for the American people.

Most importantly, if confirmed, I pledge to protect the approximately 160,000 U.S. citizens who call Costa Rica home, including many U.S. retirees and the more than 1 and a half million U.S.

citizens who visit Costa Rica each year. Their safety and well-being will be my highest priority.

Costa Rica has long been one of the United States' most reliable and like minded partners in the Western Hemisphere. As a long-standing democracy, Costa Rica serves as a model of stability in a region of the world that continues to face complex and evolving political challenges, including the dismantling of transnational criminal organizations, counternarcotics, cybersecurity, and combating illegal immigration. In addition, increasing Chinese Communist Party economic coercion poses risk for U.S. national security and prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, this is a great honor. If confirmed, I will bring the same energy, discipline, and commitment that I have brought to my work in business and philanthropy to representing the U.S. in Costa Rica. I will work with Costa Rica as our partner to keep Americans safe and create prosperity. I also pledge to work tirelessly on behalf of the American people and to keep this committee fully informed.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Pura vida.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes

Melinda Hildebrand

Printed Name: Melinda Hildebrand

Date: 9.3.25

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hildebrand follows:]

Prepared Statement of Melinda Hildebrand

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this committee, it is an honor to appear before you as President Donald J. Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica. I am sincerely grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me. Thank you, Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, for your kind words, counsel and encouragement throughout this process. We are fortunate to have you representing the great State of Texas in the Senate.

I would like to introduce you to my family who are joining me today, my husband of 36 years, Jeff, our children, Brittany and John Thomas, and Jeffery, who is watching back home in Texas. Also, my mother Pat Budinger and sister Michelle Maresh. I want to thank them for their support and confidence.

My faith is very important to me and to our family. My father was an ordained deacon in the Catholic church and was a tremendous inspiration to me. I know he would be immensely proud of my nomination. If confirmed, I will be a praying Ambassador, specifically praying for President Trump, for Americans that live, work or are visiting Costa Rica, for the residents of Costa Rica, and for God's grace and guidance as an ambassador.

Giving back and serving others has long been a priority for me, and our entire family. We traveled to Mexico and Costa Rica where we worked alongside property owners to build a home for their families. As vice president and now president of the Hildebrand Foundation, we have awarded grants totaling more than \$390 million to provide resources for higher education, medical services, parks, and supporting those in need, combating addiction issues, and victims of sex trafficking in the Houston area.

I also have had the privilege to serve on the boards of MD Anderson Cancer Center, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Houston Parks Board, among others. My work in philanthropy deepened my appreciation for responsible stewardship, accountability, and public service.

In particular, my time at the Partnership to End Addiction and through prevention and education programs that I have helped to create, not only reflect my strong passion to address addiction issues, but also provide insight into the effects of drugs on our young people.

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As a small business owner for over 12 years, I have a unique perspective of how important they are to our economy and the challenges they face. I believe this experience, as well as a partner in building multiple larger businesses that employ over 6,000 hardworking Americans, has prepared me to take on this role.

If confirmed, I am committed to using these experiences and attributes as U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica to enhance the bilateral relationship to deliver America First wins for the American people.

Most importantly, if confirmed, I pledge to protect the approximately one hundred sixty thousand U.S. citizens who call Costa Rica home, including many U.S. retirees, and the more than one and a half million U.S. citizens who visit Costa Rica each year. Their safety and well-being will be my highest priority.

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, this nomination is a great honor. If confirmed, I will bring the same energy, discipline, and commitment that I have brought to my work in business and philanthropy to representing the United States of America in Costa Rica. I will work with Costa Rica as our partner to keep Americans safe and create prosperity. I also pledge to work tirelessly on behalf of the American people, and to keep this committee fully informed.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions. "Pura Vida."

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Ms. Hildebrand, and I think that was an excellent presentation about what an important ally that this country is in a region that we do not necessarily have friends everywhere, so it is—it is good to have somebody like that. I know you will take care of us there.

Let us turn to Mr. Bazzi.

STATEMENT OF HON. BILL BAZZI, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you, Senate. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. Today, I have with me my wife, Nadia, who stood by me many years in service serving in the Marines, and thank you for her unwavering support. I also want to thank Dr. Fawaz for also flying from Detroit to here to support me, and also our good friend, Nadia Nasir, behind me also. She flew in from Detroit to support me as well.

When I arrived in America at age 12, I had no formal education. My journey was not easy, but it eventually led me to the United States Marine Corps, where I honorably served for 21 years and where I learned the value of discipline, resilience, and service. Today, I am deeply grateful for the opportunities America has provided me, and my path is a testament to the strength and potential of this country. The Marine Corps not only shaped me into a stronger individual, but also reinforced the idea that with hard work and dedication, no challenge is too difficult to overcome. From cutting edge innovation at Boeing, to the legacy of excellence at Ford Motor Company, and now as a mayor serving my community with pride and purpose, I have built a life rooted in leadership, dedication, and deep commitment to progress. My story is not just my own. It is the story of what is possible in America, where perseverance meets opportunity, and I have made it my mission to give back in gratitude for all that this nation has helped me achieve.

President Trump and Secretary Rubio have articulated a clear vision for U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. If confirmed, these principles would be the cornerstone of our approach to Tunisia, but my foremost priority would be ensuring the safety and security of Americans living in and also visiting Tunisia. This commitment is unwavering.

The United States seeks a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with Tunisia, one that fosters cooperation and commercial opportunities, eliminates threats, and projects stability in the region. I am eager to build on over 200 years of friendship with Tunisia to advance our shared interests, including countering terrorism, containing illegal immigration, and forging enduring economic and cultural ties. To that end, if confirmed, I seek a mutually beneficial partnership with Tunisia to ensure every dollar the United States invests in Tunisia yields a significant return on investment, and if confirmed, I would promote open markets for U.S.

companies and products, and strengthening the economic linkages between Tunisians and Americans.

I also understand the challenges that Tunisia faces today. If confirmed, I commit to engaging Tunisians from across the political and economic spectrum to understand their aspirations, their plans for moving their country forward to a greater prosperity, and identifying areas where we can work together in our mutual interests. My priority would be a respectful and constructive dialogue with Tunisian counterparts to advance U.S. policies.

Tunisia is a remarkable country that I have had the pleasure of visiting multiple times throughout my career, both as a mayor and also in the private sector. It is a vibrant society, and people hold enormous potential. I am excited by the prospects of meeting and working with Tunisians from across the government, private sector, and civil society to advance our shared interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to leading a team of professionals at our U.S. embassy in Tunis and working with Congress to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Thank you, sir, ma'am.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes



Printed Name: BILL BAZZI

Date: 9/3/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bazzi follows:]

Prepared Statement of Bill Bazzi

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the privilege to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me.

When I arrived in America at the age of 12, I had no formal education. My journey wasn't easy, but it eventually led me to the U.S. Marine Corps, where I honorably served 21 years and where I learned the value of discipline, resilience, and service.

Today, I'm deeply grateful for the opportunities America has provided me, and I see my path as a testament to the strength and potential of this country. The Marine Corps not only shaped me into a stronger individual but also reinforced the idea that with hard work and dedication, no challenge is too difficult to overcome. From the cutting-edge innovation at Boeing to the legacy of excellence at Ford Motor Company, and now as mayor serving my community with pride and purpose, I've built a life rooted in leadership, dedication, and a deep commitment to progress. My story is not just my own, it's the story of what's possible in America when perseverance meets opportunity, and I've made it my mission to give back in gratitude for all that this nation has helped me achieve.

President Trump and Secretary Rubio have articulated a clear vision for U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

If confirmed, these principles would be the cornerstone of our approach to Tunisia, but my foremost priority would be ensuring the safety and security of Americans living in and visiting Tunisia. This commitment is unwavering.

The United States seeks a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with Tunisia, one that fosters cooperation on commercial opportunities, eliminates threats, and projects stability in the region. I am eager to build on over 200 years of friendship with Tunisia to advance our shared interests, including countering terrorism, containing illegal immigration, and forging enduring economic and cultural ties.

To that end, if confirmed, I would seek a mutually beneficial partnership with Tunisia and ensure every dollar the United States invests in Tunisia yields a significant return on investment. And if confirmed, I would promote open markets for U.S. companies and products, and strengthen the economic linkages between Tunisians and Americans.

I also understand the challenges Tunisia faces. If confirmed, I commit to engaging Tunisians from across the political and economic spectrum to understand their aspirations, their plans for moving their country forward to greater prosperity, and identifying areas where we can work together in our mutual interests. My priority would be a respectful and constructive dialogue with Tunisian counterparts to advance U.S. policies.

Tunisia is a remarkable country that I have had the pleasure of visiting multiple times throughout my career, both as a mayor and in the private sector. Its vibrant society and people hold enormous potential. I am excited by the prospect of meeting and working with Tunisians from across the government, private sector, and civil society to advance our shared interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to leading the team of professionals at our Embassy and working with Congress to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Bazzi. Certainly, Tunisia is important. They have a robust population that are glad to be activists when necessary, so it will be a challenge, I am sure, but I think you are up to it.

So, with that, we will turn to Mr. Wilcox.

STATEMENT OF TODD WILCOX, OF FLORIDA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Mr. WILCOX. Good morning, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and all the members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today seeking your advice and consent regarding

my nomination as the Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security. It is worth noting the sacrifices of spouses and family members of all of us who serve our country. I would like to spend a few minutes to recognize some of my family members here today and to address some of the stakeholders at Diplomatic Security.

Christine Wilcox, my wife of 20 years, is the strength and center of gravity of our family. It is her strength that allows me to serve in such a demanding role.

Christine, I acknowledge and appreciate the level of sacrifice that you will endure as I step up to serve our country once again, and in fact all the sacrifices over the many years and the many harrowing and sometimes death defying paths that I have taken. You are and always will be the love of my life.

To my daughters—excuse me. A bit passionate about my family. Senator RISCH. We all are.

Mr. WILCOX. To my daughters, Tori, Danielle, and Hayden, you are my pride and joy. Being your father has been the most gratifying and purposeful part of my life. You have taught me the definition of unconditional love. I am very proud that you have learned from my example, one that is captured in a speech by Teddy Roosevelt, known as the “Man in the Arena.” It is not the critic that counts, but the real credit belongs to the man or woman who is actually in the arena, actively engaged in challenging endeavors, experiencing both triumphs and setbacks. All three of you have chosen your own challenging endeavors while avoiding the path of least resistance, and for that, I could not be more proud.

I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for giving me the opportunity to serve our country in such an important role. I am honored to be nominated, and I am eager to become a part of this Administration’s winning team. I will lead with honor, distinction, and loyalty, and I will not let you down.

To the men and women of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, I, if confirmed, will be honored to lead such an extraordinary and exceptionally professional cadre of special agents, security engineers, technical specialists, couriers, protective officers, and support personnel, not to mention the thousands of contract support personnel.

I see this as a command position. You will quickly recognize that my command philosophy includes leading by example, leading from the front, and being technically and tactically proficient. I will hold everyone accountable to high standards of performance, including myself, and I will accept fully the responsibilities of everything that happens or fails to happen in our bureau. If confirmed, I will move quickly to build a high performance team that will foster esprit de corps and a culture that emphasizes mission first, disciplined execution, and a working environment that rewards learning, adapting, and innovating.

Our mission is critical to the execution of exceptional American diplomacy. By providing embassy security operations, dignitary protection, and law enforcement investigative support, I will ensure that the bureau’s personnel, resources, and organizational structure are shaped to revolve around these three lines of effort. To that end, there will likely be change, but you should know that my leadership team and I will fully and thoroughly assess every aspect of our operations and infrastructure before making that change.

The world is a very dangerous place, and we are here to defend, protect, and serve the Department and America against very determined enemies. We will certainly face significant challenges, and there will be crises. In those moments, you should know that your lives and your well being mean more to me than my own. I am eager to take command, and I look forward to working with all of you.

To the members of the committee, in advance, I thank you for your candid and professional assessment of my qualifications to fulfill this assignment. I have been asked several times why I am seeking this nomination. Frankly speaking, it is the hardest job that I am qualified for. Over the past 35 years of my professional life, time and again, I have demonstrated the ability to build high performance teams that can accomplish seemingly impossible missions with limited resources. If confirmed, I will bring these qualifications to bear as I lead the team of highly qualified Diplomatic Security personnel in support of the President's America First foreign policy. My motivation to serve could be underscored by the words in the book of Isaiah: "Here I am. Send me."

I respectfully urge this committee and the full Senate to work diligently to confirm all of the President's nominees. I look forward to answering your questions, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with all of you and your staff. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes

Printed Name: Todd Wilcox
Date: 9/3/2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilcox follows:]

Prepared Statement of Todd Wilcox

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today, seeking your advice and consent regarding my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security.

It is worth noting the sacrifices of the spouses and families of all who step up to serve our country. I would like to recognize a few people here with me today and to address the stakeholders of my nomination.

I have been Christine Wilcox's husband for nearly 20 years, and it is her strength as the center of gravity for our family that allows me to serve in such a critical and demanding role. Christine, I acknowledge and appreciate the level of sacrifice you will endure as I step up to serve our country once again and all that you have sacrificed over the years, throughout the harrowing and sometimes death-defying paths that I have taken. You are and always have been the love of my life.

To my daughters, Tori, Danielle, and Hayden. You are my pride and joy. Being your father has been the most gratifying and purposeful part of my life. You have taught me about unconditional love. I am proud that you have learned by my example, one that is captured in a speech by Teddy Roosevelt, known as the Man in the Arena: "It is not the critic that counts but that the real credit belongs to the man (or woman) who is actually in the arena," actively engaged in challenging endeavors, experiencing both triumphs and setbacks. All three of you have chosen your own challenging endeavors, while avoiding the path of least resistance. I am so proud of you.

I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for giving me the opportunity to serve our country in such an important role. I am honored to be nominated and eager to become a part of this administration's winning team. I will lead with honor, distinction, and loyalty. I will not let you down.

To the men and women of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, I am honored to lead such an exceptionally professional cadre of special agents, security engineering officers, security technical specialists, diplomatic couriers, uniformed protective officers, and support personnel.

I see this as a command position. You will quickly recognize that my command philosophy includes leading by example, leading from the front, and being technically and tactically proficient. I will hold everyone accountable to high standards of performance, including myself, and I accept responsibility for all that happens or fails to happen in our bureau.

Once confirmed, I will move quickly to build a high-performing leadership team that will foster a culture and esprit de corps, emphasizing mission and disciplined execution in a working environment that rewards learning, adapting and innovating.

Our mission is critical to the execution of exceptional American diplomacy by providing embassy security operations, dignitary protection, and law enforcement support. I will ensure that the bureau's personnel, resources, and organizational structure are shaped to revolve around these three primary lines of effort.

To that end, there will be change, but know that my leadership team and I will thoughtfully assess every aspect of our operations and infrastructure before making that change.

The world is a very dangerous place, and we are here to defend, protect, and serve the Department and America against very determined enemies. We will certainly face significant challenges, and there will be crises. In those moments, you should know that your lives and your well-being mean more to me than my own. I am eager to take command, and I look forward to working with all of you.

To Members of the Committee, I thank you in advance for your candid and professional assessment of my qualifications to fulfill this nomination.

I have been asked several times why I am seeking this nomination. Frankly speaking, it is the hardest job for which I am qualified. Over the past 35 years of my professional life, time and again, I have demonstrated the ability to build high performance teams that can accomplish nearly impossible missions with limited resources. If confirmed, I will bring these qualifications to bear as I lead the team of highly qualified Diplomatic Security professionals in support of the President's America First Foreign Policy.

My motivation to serve can be underscored by the words in the Book of Isaiah: "Here am I; send me!" I respectfully urge this committee and the Senate to work diligently to advance and confirm the President's nominees. I look forward to answering your questions and, if confirmed, to working with all of you. Thank you.

Senator Risch. Thank you, Mr. Wilcox. I think everybody on the committee recognizes that our people out there cannot do the job without being secure, and every single one of us on the committee has experienced the security in our embassies around the world. I have been impressed with it. I have every confidence that you will maintain the kind of security that we have seen and that has been so important to us.

Mr. Negrea.

STATEMENT OF DAN NEGREA, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AN ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. NEGREA. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity—

VOICE. Microphone.

Mr. NEGREA. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be—

[Audio malfunction in the hearing room.]

Mr. NEGREA. Works now?

VOICE. I think—I think yes.

Hold on. Hold on.

[Brief pause.]

Mr. NEGREA. Works now?

[Brief pause.]

Mr. NEGREA. Works now? OK. Less dramatic than the interruptions.

[Laughter.]

Mr. NEGREA. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be nominated by President Trump to serve as the United States Representative to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council. Please allow me to introduce my wife, Nikki.

No? OK.

[Audio malfunction in the hearing room.]

Mr. NEGREA. This works? Yes. OK. Much better. I will pass over the first paragraph.

I am blessed with a great family. Please allow me to introduce my wife, Nikki, my daughter, Victoria, and my sons Peter and Michael. A special note about Peter, a lieutenant in the Connecticut National Guard. Accompanied by our prayers, he will leave soon on a 1 year deployment to the Middle East. Also, attendant is family friend, Brad Browne.

In my early 20s, I came to this country as a political refugee from communist Romania with just \$200 to my name. I would be very grateful for the opportunity to serve again this great country that accepted me so generously. I will bring to this position relevant business, diplomatic, and research experiences. I worked on

Wall Street for 35 years, serving the Department of State on economic affairs and wrote extensively on geostrategy and development matters.

The United Nations is at a critical junction. It must reform to become a more effective institution. Under President Trump and Secretary Rubio's leadership, U.N. reform is not only possible, it is imperative. Eighty years ago, the founding members of the United Nations set out to solve "world problems of an economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian character." The Ambassador to ECOSOC is responsible for these matters across the U.N. system, whether in the 54 member Economic and Social Council, the 193 member General Assembly, or the executive boards of the operational agencies. If confirmed, I will use my voice to refocus the organization on its core mission. I will advance President Trump's America First peace through strength foreign policy, and I will ensure that every taxpayer dollar spent at the United Nations makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

We know that freedom and prosperity go hand in hand. ECOSOC's historical purpose was to foster peace by building socio-economic ties to complement the peace building efforts of the Security Council. ECOSOC was intended to build bridges between nations and find areas of mutual cooperation in trade, commerce, and human rights. However, it has strayed into socially divisive programs, has promoted worldviews antithetical to America's founding ideals, and has drifted into an obsessive anti-Israel bias. If confirmed, I will bring common sense, purpose, and belief in American exceptionalism back to the ECOSOC.

Through my leadership, I will promote economic opportunity, free market capitalism, and an unapologetic defense of America's sovereignty. If confirmed, I will work to fulfill Secretary Rubio's vision to prioritize trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance. We can thereby usher in a new era of global partnership, peace, investment, and prosperity. We need to elevate the voices of the U.S. private sector at the U.N. and create business opportunities for American companies.

Instilling change at the U.N. and advancing American objectives cannot come without greater accountability, transparency, and reform within the U.N. system, all of which I pledge to pursue. We must ensure that authoritarian countries like China do not exploit the U.N. to advance their interests or set technical standards that undermine U.S. businesses. We can do so by forming coalitions of like minded countries and pursuing leadership roles for Americans within the U.N.

We also reject China's claim that it is a developing country and is, therefore, entitled to the aid and benefits the United Nations' organizations extend to such countries. China has made great progress in its development and has the world's second largest economy. If confirmed, I will advocate for recognizing China as a developed country and for the increase in China's voluntary financial contributions.

Demands for more burden sharing at the U.N. should not be limited to China. President Trump was successful in convincing our NATO allies to meet their spending commitments. If confirmed, I will work to move other countries, particularly the richest nations

of Europe, to pay more for projects around the world. I understand that the United States is reviewing its participation in all international organizations. While the U.S. role in the multilateral system may evolve, it does not mean that the U.S. will disengage. As Secretary Rubio has stated, America First does not mean America alone. America will continue to be one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to foreign assistance.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members, representing the United States at the United Nations would be the honor of a lifetime. I echo Ambassador nominee Mike Waltz's call to make the United Nations great again. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes

Printed Name: Dan ~~Smith~~ Negrea
Date: 9/3/2005

[The prepared statement of Mr. Negrea follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dan Negrea

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished Members: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be nominated by President Trump to serve as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

I am blessed with a great family—please allow me to introduce my wife Nikki, my daughter Victoria, and my sons, Peter and Michael. A special note about Peter, a lieutenant in the Connecticut National Guard. Accompanied by our prayers, he will leave soon on a 1-year deployment to the Middle East. Also attending is family friend Brad Browne.

In my early 20s, I came to this country as a political refugee from Communist Romania with just \$200 to my name. I would be very grateful for the opportunity to serve again this great country that accepted me so generously.

I would bring to this position relevant business, diplomatic, and research experiences. I worked on Wall Street for 35 years, served in the Department of State on economic affairs, and wrote extensively on geostrategy and development matters.

The United Nations is at a critical juncture: it must reform to become a more effective institution. Under President Trump and Secretary Rubio's leadership, U.N. reform is not only possible—it is an imperative.

Eighty years ago, the founding members of the United Nations set out to solve world “problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.” The Ambassador to ECOSOC is responsible for these matters across the U.N. system, whether in the 54-member Economic and Social Council, the 193-member General Assembly, or the executive boards of the operational agencies.

If confirmed, I will use my voice to refocus the organization on its core mission. I will advance President Trump's America-First, peace-through-strength foreign policy and I will ensure that every taxpayer dollar spent at the U.N. makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

We know that freedom and prosperity go hand in hand. ECOSOC's historical purpose was to foster peace by building socio-economic ties. To complement the peacebuilding efforts of the Security Council, ECOSOC was intended to build bridges between nations and find areas of mutual cooperation in trade, commerce, and human rights.

However, it has strayed into socially divisive programs, has promoted worldviews antithetical to America's founding ideals, and has drifted into an obsessive anti-Israel bias. If confirmed, I will bring common sense, purpose, and belief in American exceptionalism back to ECOSOC. Through my leadership, I will promote economic opportunity, free-market capitalism, and an unapologetic defense of America's sovereignty.

If confirmed, I will work to fulfill Secretary Rubio's vision to prioritize trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance. We can thereby usher in a new era of global partnership, peace, investment, and prosperity. We need to elevate the voices of the U.S. private sector at the U.N. and create business opportunities for American companies.

Instilling change at the U.N. and advancing American objectives cannot come without greater accountability, transparency, and reform within the U.N. system—all of which I pledge to pursue. We must ensure that authoritarian countries like China do not exploit the U.N. to advance their interests or set technical standards that undermine U.S. businesses—we can do so by forming coalitions of like-minded countries and pursuing leadership roles for Americans within the U.N.

We also reject China's claim that it is a developing country and is therefore entitled to the aid and benefits the U.N. organizations extend to such countries. China has made great progress in its development and has the world's second largest economy. If confirmed, I will advocate for recognizing China as a developed country and for an increase in Chinese voluntary financial contributions.

Demands for more burden-sharing at the U.N. should not be limited to China. President Trump was successful in convincing our NATO allies to meet their spending commitments. If confirmed, I will work to move other countries, particularly the richest nations of Europe, to pay more for projects around the world.

I understand that the United States is reviewing its participation in all international organizations. While the U.S. role in the multilateral system may evolve, it does not mean the U.S. will disengage. As Secretary Rubio has stated, “America First does not mean America alone”—America will continue to be one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to foreign assistance.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished Members—Representing the United States at the United Nations would be the honor of a lifetime. I echo Ambassador nominee Mike Walz’s call to Make the U.N. Great Again. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Negrea. Certainly a challenging job.

Mr. Barnes.

STATEMENT OF RILEY BARNES, OF TEXAS, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

Mr. BARNES. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, members of the committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. I want to extend my gratitude to President Trump for this nomination. If confirmed, it will be an incredible honor and privilege to work for Secretary Rubio in this capacity.

I am also grateful to Senator Cornyn for his generous introduction. Texas is home, and I am very proud to have Senator Cornyn represent me in the Senate and as a former boss.

I would like to next introduce my family. It is their love and constant help that make it possible for me to pursue public service. With me today is my beautiful wife of 12 years, Katie. Next to her are Benjamin, who is 9, Henry, who is 7, Mary Margaret, who is almost 4 and a half. They are all very brave, and I am very proud of all of them. I should also note that with Katie is also little Charlie, who is due in November and is named, in part, after my father who passed away 4 weeks ago today.

In his first remarks to the State Department employees, Secretary Rubio emphasized that we are a nation founded on a powerful principle, and that powerful principle is that all men are created equal because our rights come from God, our Creator, not from our laws, not from our governments. The Secretary went on to say that we will always be strong defenders of that principle, and that is why the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor is important. We are a nation of individuals, each made in the image of God and possessing an inherent dignity. This is a truth that our founders understood as essential to American self-government.

I believe that our country and our government are the best in the world, and our strength comes from our enduring values. These values are not an endless list of rights that people create and change and form to meet their own needs or desires. These values are not identity politics. They are the historic, natural rights that we have as individuals pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in this world. For rights to be untethered from this core principle is to make them mere sentiments, easily manipulated by authoritarians and bad actors. Natural rights are a blessing and an immutable reality. President Trump and Secretary Rubio, like our founding fathers, understand this. If confirmed, I will work diligently to elevate the inalienable rights and freedoms recognized in our founding documents. These provide a firm foundation for DRL’s work. America’s recognition of unalienable rights is unique in human history,

and it is our duty to defend those rights for our citizens and champion them for the rest of the world to enjoy.

When I started talking to my children about this opportunity, I told them that the bureau's job is to tell the truth, to call out countries that violate these rights, and to expose and punish bad actors whose assaults on human dignity threaten the American way of life: a life of freedom. Part of this job would also require challenging those who censor those values. As Secretary Rubio has said, free speech is among the most cherished rights we enjoy as Americans. It is a right enshrined in our Constitution, and it sets us apart as a beacon of freedom around the world. It is important that we defend free speech as an essential element of good governance.

Our country is also the strongest defender of religious freedom around the world. Championing this first freedom would be an essential component of my job if confirmed. Pushing back on the scourge of anti-Semitism and strongly encouraging partners to do more to fight it is also greatly needed. Combating human trafficking is also vital to protecting our communities and fortifying our national security. To achieve these goals, I am committed to working with the President's nominees to lead the Office of International Religious Freedom, the Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Finally, if confirmed, I will ensure DRL defends the interests of American workers on the global stage. That means fighting for a level playing field and protecting American workers and industry from foreign actors that violate labor laws and undermine our national security. Forced labor and child labor are morally reprehensible, and they also threaten American prosperity. The work of DRL, including the TIP Office, to prohibit the importation of goods made with forced labor is critical to ensuring the American economy flourishes.

Thank you again for your time this morning. As mentioned, as a former Senate staffer, I have a deep respect for this institution, the committee, and the important role you fulfill in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with this committee on issues of mutual concern and promise to make myself available to committee members. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

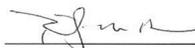
1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes

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

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Riley M. Barnes

Date: 9-3-2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barnes follows:]

Prepared Statement of Riley Barnes

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Members of the Committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL).

I want to extend my gratitude to President Trump for this nomination. If confirmed, it will be an incredible honor and privilege to work for Secretary Rubio in this capacity. I am also grateful to Senator Cornyn for his generous introduction. Texas is home, and I am very proud to have Senator Cornyn represent me in the Senate, and as a former boss.

I would like to introduce my family next. It's their love and constant help that make it possible for me to pursue public service. With me today is my beautiful wife of 12 years, Katie. Next to her are: Benjamin, Henry, and Mary Margaret. I'm very proud of them. And I should note also with Katie is little Charlie, due in November, who is named—in part—after my father who passed away 4 weeks ago today.

In his first remarks to State Department employees, Secretary Rubio emphasized that, "We are a nation founded on a powerful principle, and that powerful principle is that all men are created equal, because our rights come from God our Creator—not from our laws, not from our governments." The Secretary went on to say that we will always be strong defenders of that principle. And that's why the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor is important. We are a nation of individuals, each made in the image of God and possessing an inherent dignity. This is a truth that our founders understood as essential to American self-government.

I believe our country and our government is the best in the world, and our strength comes from our enduring values. These values aren't an endless list of "rights" that people create and change and form to meet their own needs or desires. These values aren't identity politics. They are the historic, natural rights that we have as individuals, pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in this world. For rights to be untethered from this core principle is to make them mere sentiments, easily manipulated by authoritarians and bad actors. Natural rights are a blessing and an immutable reality. President Trump and Secretary Rubio, like our Founding Fathers, understand this.

If confirmed, I will work diligently to elevate the unalienable rights and freedoms recognized in our founding documents. These provide a firm foundation for DRL's work. America's recognition of unalienable rights is unique in human history. And it is our duty to defend those rights for our citizens, and champion them for the rest of the world to enjoy.

When I started talking to my children about this opportunity, I told them the Bureau's job is to tell the truth: to call out countries that violate these rights, and to expose and punish bad actors whose assaults on human dignity threaten the American way of life, a life of freedom.

Part of this job would also require challenging those who censor these values. As Secretary Rubio has said, free speech is among the most cherished rights we enjoy as Americans. It is a right enshrined in our constitution, and it sets us apart as a beacon of freedom around the world. It is important that we defend free speech as an essential element of good governance.

Our country is the strongest defender of religious freedom around the world. Championing this first freedom would be an essential component of my job if confirmed. Pushing back on the scourge of antisemitism—and strongly encouraging partners to do more to fight it—is greatly needed.

Combating human trafficking is also vital to protecting our communities and fortifying our national security. To achieve these goals, I'm committed to working with the President's nominees to lead the Office of International Religious Freedom, the Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Finally, if confirmed, I will ensure DRL defends the interest of American workers on the global stage. That means fighting for a level playing field and protecting American workers and industry from foreign actors that violate labor laws and undermine our national security. Forced labor and child labor are morally reprehensible and threaten American prosperity. The work of DRL, including the TIP Office, to prohibit the importation of goods made with forced labor is critical to ensuring the American economy flourishes.

Thank you again for your time this morning. As a former Senate staffer, I have deep respect for this institution, the committee, and the important role you fulfill in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I am committed to working close-

ly with this committee on issues of mutual concern, and promise to make myself available to committee Members. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Barnes. Another tough job.

We are now going to embark on a round of questions, 5 minutes. I will start with myself.

Ms. Hildebrand, I am going to start with you. Could you take a minute and give us a thumbnail sketch of what the political and the socioeconomic state of affairs is on the ground in Costa Rica? And if you would, one of the things that has always escaped me is how Costa Rica stands out so much differently than the other countries that are their neighbors. Why is that? Maybe you could enlighten us a little bit on that.

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Thank you for your question, Senator.

The political state of affairs between the United States and Costa Rica is strong. They are our strongest trading partner, and I look forward to exploring additional opportunities to strengthen those ties. As far as your question as to why Costa Rica stands out, I look forward to working with you and this committee to explore those reasons. I know that Costa Rica serves as an example to Central America, and I hope that other countries will take their lead.

Senator RISCH. Well, that is good, and I agree with you. They do stand out, and they should serve as a beacon for other countries in the region, but for some reason they do not seem to a lot, and the other countries do not have nearly the benefits as a result of that that Costa Rica has. So, it will be interesting as you take your job and see if we cannot bring those others to the same status that Costa Rica is.

Let us see. Mr. Bazzi, same for you. Tunisia has a very robust population that takes their rights seriously and take to the streets from time to time to express those rights. Tell us your view of what the status is of the country from a political standpoint, from a geopolitical standpoint, and again, how it differs from its neighbors, Algeria and Morocco and other countries, in the region.

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for the question, Senator.

So, from everything that I have been reading about Tunisia and also my experience in Tunisia, it is a very vibrant country. The people there, they are hard workers. Obviously, we heard about the uprising several years ago, people that took to the streets, just wanted to do better things. They want a better economy. And again, if confirmed, I want to be on the ground talking to different people from the—*from the government, also from different organizations to see what we can do as Americans to help with their prosperity there, trying to uplift the economy. And with the help of the committee—I am willing to take any recommendations from the committee to have the better tools to help the Tunisian people as well. Thank you.*

Senator RISCH. They have been relatively stable over recent years, and the president there has enjoyed popularity for a period of time, but it seems that it is waning a bit. Can you shed any light on that? You know, we have had some recent demonstrations in the streets there in Tunisia, people unhappy with government, which people are always unhappy with the government, and I understand

that, but it seems like it is fired up a little bit there. Can you shed any light on that for us here today?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for that question, Senator.

So, one of the things, what I like to do is I like to be boots on the ground, be able to talk to different people from government, also from the people of Tunisia, to see what their key issues and just find out what some of their concerns are, and just work with the government counterparts in Tunisia to see what we can do to work together and just to see what concerns that I can bring up here to the committee to see what we can do to help the people in Tunisia.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that, and that is fair. I know you have not been there on the ground yet recently, so I will accept that answer.

With that, I will yield to my distinguished colleague.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Wilcox, I am going to start with you because I agree the head of diplomatic security is one of the most challenging jobs within the State Department, and without security and safety of our diplomats, we cannot get anything else done. I had a very personal experience with that just over August when I visited Syria and saw how many security personnel were required to come and ensure that we were safe during our time in Syria. Now, this Administration has tasked hundreds of diplomatic security agents—

[Cellphone ringing.]

Senator SHAHEEN. The President is calling.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Well, not this time, but maybe next time.

[Laughter.]

Senator SHAHEEN. He has tasked hundreds of diplomatic security agents to assist with roles that, typically, are beyond the scope of the State Department, so, for example, aiding Federal law enforcement efforts in DC. If confirmed, how will you balance the bureau's core responsibilities, such as protecting Americans overseas, with other requests of the Administration?

Mr. WILCOX. Thank you for the question, Senator.

As I said in my opening statement, my first priority is going to be assess the personnel, the resources, the infrastructure, and the organizational alignment against the three priorities that we have in Diplomatic Security, and that is embassy operations, security operations overseas. That is our personnel, our infrastructure, our information systems, as well as dignitary protection, and then the full gamut of law enforcement investigations that will be taken. As you know, our primary effort is passport and visa fraud. As you alluded to, we have been surged, as I know, and again, not confirmed and have not gotten details on numbers of personnel, but DS personnel have been assigned to the DC Task Force. My understanding is it is 28 to 30 personnel on the ground. Additionally, as you know, in February, the DHS Secretary deputized DS along with FBI, IRS, DOJ, the Texas National Guard, DEA, Bureau of Prisons, Marshals with Title VIII authority. Given the large gamut of requirements that we have, I am confident that the professionalism and the training of the DS special agents is enough to handle these missions.

We currently have 531 special agents here in the United States. My understanding is they are adequately trained and resourced to handle these new missions, both here in DC and supporting DHS's Title VIII authorities. If confirmed, I will dig into this operational kind of requirements. I am very sensitive to mission creep, having come from the military and spent some time in the CIA. I understand that we cannot do more with less. So, I will assess all the resources at my disposal, if confirmed, and make sure that they are allocated against the highest priorities. And if cannot do everything, I will be very candid with my chain of command to articulate the trade offs.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciate that. I think you will find that the resources of the Diplomatic Security Office have been stretched thin in recent years. It is not a function just of this Administration. It has happened over a period of years, and I understand that 600 DS agents have been deputized to the Department of Homeland Security for immigration enforcement, so that is a lot from a bureau that is not that big. So, I hope you will look very closely at this, and if there are concerns, that you will be willing to raise those concerns, even though they may not be consistent with what you are being told by the White House about what the needs are.

Mr. WILCOX. Yes, ma'am. My obligation to the work force and the chain of command is to be professionally candid about the give and take of any mission set that we are assigned.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Bazzi, I understand that you went to Tunisia in 2019 as part of an exchange program for public servants, and that it is that program that helped encourage you to think about this post that you have been nominated for. Can you talk a little bit about why you found that experience valuable, and how you will advocate for American students and professionals who should also have these kinds of opportunities in the future?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for the question, Senator. Also, I want to thank your staff. I met with them last visit I was here. They are very professional, so I commend your staff for asking a lot of great questions as well.

So, my trip to Tunisia, I have been there multiple times, but the one time I went under MEPI with the State Department, it was most eye opening with some of the things that I got chance to experience. And just being in the military, I always like to be boots on the ground, you know, talk to different people, and you know, I just do not like when somebody takes you on a tour. I am the person that actually go away from the tour. I want to engage people, and I got chance to do a lot of it when I was in Tunisia in 2019 with the MEPI—I mean, under the State Department program. I did not just talk to elected officials. I talked to constituents. I went to an orphanage, I went to schools, I went to the universities also, and it seems there were just like people that just—they want to do the best they can. They want to get an education. They want to get good jobs. They just want their economy to be better. It is just like any country that I have been to, and that is some of the fascinating thing about the Tunisian people. They are resilient. They are also—they are hard workers, and they just want to do great things.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Bazzi. I think that program is one that is very important to ensure that we can encourage people to think about why what is happening in other countries are important to the United States, and I am disappointed that it is one of those that is on the chopping block. So, I hope you will advocate to ensure that that funding continues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank all of our nominees for your willingness to step up and serve our great nation, and also for your families who will serve alongside you, especially those serving overseas. It is a lot of sacrifice to spend time away from your friends and family here in the United States. I can tell you, having been a Governor and done trade missions, that the diplomatic staff overseas really does a fantastic job, so thank you for your willingness to do that.

Mr. Barnes, in your opening remarks, you mentioned about—you talked about forced labor, and communist China's mass detention and surveillance of Uyghurs has made Xinjiang a global symbol of forced labor and human rights abuses. That is why the Congress passed a Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. But a recent *New York Times* article—Bureau of Investigative Journalism Report revealed Beijing is now sidestepping that law. Communist China is now transferring tens of thousands of Uyghurs out of Xinjiang to factories across China. The state run labor transfers make it far more difficult for cuss officials and supply chain auditors to detect these abuses. That is why in June, I led a bipartisan letter with several of my colleagues, urging stronger U.S. action to counter this evasion by the PRC, but the bigger issue before us today is how the United States will use every tool available to shine light on these abuses and hold the perpetrators accountable. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor must be at the forefront of this fight.

Mr. Barnes, these labor transfer programs are deliberately designed to conceal forced labor from the outside world. What role should the DRL play in documenting and exposing the extent of these abuses across China?

Mr. BARNES. Senator, thank you for the question, and I am appreciative of the Uyghur Force Labor Prevention Act because it has really shined a light on this issue. And I am not sitting in DRL currently in my capacity at the State Department, but I am positive—almost positive that there are several people in that bureau right now who are focusing on that issue and are tracking that *New York Times* report that you just referenced. And you are right, as soon as you take action you have accountability measures for these types of things, China is going to bob and weave and maneuver to circumvent and get around it. And I do think DRL is well positioned to be the tip of the spear leading the Department in that effort to close those loopholes, work with our partners on that and to really bring justice to those in Xinjiang and those who are being trafficked and led out of it.

Senator RICKETTS. And so, will you commit to taking this up, should you be confirmed, and driving this to—and then reporting

back to us about what progress we are making in trying to stop this evasion that China is doing?

Mr. BARNES. Senator, absolutely. Happy to work with you and the committee on this.

Senator RICKETTS. Great.

The European Union has also enacted laws to curb forced labor imports. How can you, if, again, confirmed, work with international partners to align strategies and apply the presence of the DRL on Beijing?

Mr. BARNES. Yes, Senator, that is a good question, and part of any strategy and kind of cutting off or getting after the supply chain is going to require the international community, right, because we can do a good job with American companies and with the issue here in the States and what we are seeing, but we are going to need help. I think Secretary Rubio said America First does not mean America alone, and so eager to engage, if confirmed, those partners on this issue.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much.

Mr. BARNES. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Now, Costa Rica has long been known for stability and democracy. We have kind of talked about that already, but today that reputation is under siege. Costa Rica has become one of the primary transshipment points for cocaine bound to the United States and Europe. Local gangs are competing as enforcers for major Mexican cartels, and just this summer, the Treasury Department sanctioned Costa Rican nationals and entities tied to narcotics trafficking and money laundering. President Chavez has taken significant steps, including a constitutional reform, allowing for the extradition of Costa Rican nationals for drug crimes, but the cartels are moving faster, and fentanyl is beginning to seep into the country, threatening to transform Costa Rica into a hub for synthetic drugs.

As ambassador, Ms. Hildebrand, you will be on the front lines of this fight, supporting Costa Rica's democracy while protecting Americans from the scourge of cocaine and fentanyl. Ms. Hildebrand, if you are confirmed, what specific steps will you take to strengthen the U.S.-Costa Rican cooperation to disrupt these trafficking networks?

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Thank you, Senator, for your question.

Costa Rica is a strong partner in the fight against drug trafficking in that region. I understand that the embassy works closely with the national and border police and Costa Rica to counter these efforts. If I am confirmed, I will continue that strong partnership with Costa Rica to counter drug trafficking.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Barnes, thank you very much for being here. Read and listened to your testimony, agreed with much of it, especially your focus on telling the truth about the defense of natural rights across the world.

I guess I am having trouble squaring your testimony with the current reality because we have seen a pretty unprecedented assault on democracy promotion from this State Department. As you know, 389 of DRL's 391 democracy promotion grants have been canceled. And so I guess I want to understand how you are going to make good on the promises you are making to this committee given the restrictions that exist on you.

I will give you another example. Secretary Rubio has issued a memorandum this summer that says the State Department should avoid opining on the fairness or integrity of an electoral process and simply just congratulate the winning candidate. So, how can you tell the truth about an election that is rigged or patently unfair if you have essentially a gag order placed on you by the Secretary telling you to provide no opinion, telling you to not tell the truth, even when you know that an election overseas is not a fair or on the level election?

Mr. BARNES. Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. On the—making statements about elections, the idea that, you know, you are putting something forward publicly, and that guidance I received—I was not part of drafting that guidance, but I saw it when it came out, probably just like you did. That public statements are not put out on that, I do not think that limits us to raising private concerns. So, another thing the Secretary has said regularly is that he espouses what he calls a mature foreign policy, where, whether it is an ally or an adversary, we have to be able to raise issues with them.

Senator MURPHY. So, when you say telling the truth is important, you mean that to be in private, behind closed doors. You do not believe that telling the truth about the health of a foreign country's democracy or elections needs to be said out loud.

Mr. BARNES. Senator, I think—I think it is—I think it is always important to tell the truth. I think we have lots of reporting that does underscore those issues. I think that we listen to many civil society groups on these topics, and we discuss them certainly internally, but I think we do raise these issues privately. I think we do raise them publicly when it serves American interests.

Senator MURPHY. Is the freedom of assembly a natural right?

Mr. BARNES. Yes, I think—I think I would include that as a natural right.

Senator MURPHY. So, can you explain why the freedom of assembly has been removed from State Department human rights reports? It is longer listed as a right that this Administration protects and advances globally.

Mr. BARNES. Senator, so I have—I have not been in DRL for months now, but I understand the rationale. I do not—and I do not know the exact rationale for the freedom of assembly, but I know some sections were cut that did not adhere directly to the requested statute. So, I know that the Secretary had a vision for the reports being shorter, being more readable and digestible, and reports that tack as close to statute as possible.

Senator MURPHY. Yes. I just do not know how you are actually going to follow through on the commitments you are making in your testimony. We are not funding any organizations and groups that help us tell the truth anymore. We have cut all but two DRL

grants. You have got, effectively, a gag order placed on you that says that, as you admit in front of this committee, you can only raise private concerns about the health of a democracy. You no longer can raise those concerns publicly. I think this is a watershed moment for our country if we effectively cease publicly advocating for democracy and the freedom of assembly abroad.

Mr. Bazzi, I want to ask you about how this new direction from the State Department may impact your work. I have been to Tunisia. I think I was the first member of the Senate to meet with Saied when we had some hope that he was going to be a reformer, not a despot. He recently issued an order of arrest for one of my constituents on charges of terrorism. The charge is essentially that my constituent sent a report on human rights abuses to the State Department, and now if he returns to Tunisia, he will be locked up.

Do you believe that under the current guidance issued to you by Secretary Rubio you have the ability to speak up for this particular constituent that I know we have raised with you in private meetings? Do you believe that you are limited in the ways, as ambassador, that you can speak up against the targeting of human rights defenders, in particular, American citizens, in and outside Tunisia?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for that question, Senator, and also, I want to thank your staff. I did meet with your staff yesterday. I had a great conversation with your staff, so thank you for that, Senator.

So, one of the things in my statement also said, you know, somebody, myself, that immigrated to the United States and somebody that grew up in a bad area during war, you always—you got to protect, especially the—I was not an American at the time, but you know, one of—being in the military, the biggest thing is that you have to safeguard Americans abroad. And that is one of my missions, to make sure that our Americans are safeguarded in Tunisia, either they are—if they are visiting, working, or they are living abroad. And if there are any issues or concerns if any Americans are arrested or detained of any charge, I will be conferring with our Administration, also with our government counterparts in Tunisia to see what the concerns are for whatever issues that they have with that individual and relay it here to our United States Administration to see what we can do to get that person out.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess I am asking you for a broader commitment. I understand your first responsibility is to protect Americans and their safety, but I think it is also important for you to speak up on behalf of the rights of Tunisians, but also Tunisian-Americans when it comes to criticisms of the government.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you, sir.

Senator RISC. Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Barnes, I was struck by your opening comments, and I asked to get a copy of them so I could read them and make sure I quoted them correctly. You state, and this is a quote from Secretary Rubio, “Our rights come from God, our Creator, not from our laws, not from our governments.” I find that very, very troubling.

I am a devout person. I was a missionary in Honduras. We have got other devout folks in this room—Christian, Jewish, Muslim American. The notion that rights do not come from laws and do not come from the government, but come from the Creator, that is what the Iranian government believes. It is a theocratic regime that bases its rule on Shia law and targets Sunnis, Baha'is, Jews, Christians, and other religious minorities, and they do it because they believe that they understand what natural rights are from their Creator. So, the statement that our rights do not come from our laws or our governments is extremely troubling.

I think the motto over the Supreme Court is "Equal Justice Under Law." The oath that you and I take pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, not arbitrarily defined natural rights. I am a strong believer in natural rights, but I have a feeling if we were to have a debate about natural rights in the room and put people around the table with different religious traditions, there would be some significant differences in the definitions of those natural rights.

You go on to say, "I believe our country and our government is the best in the world, and our strength comes from our enduring values." I believe that, but then you say, and you got to choose what to say in your opening testimony, these values are not an endless list of "rights." You put the quote around that to kind of demean the notion of rights that people create and change and form to meet their own needs or desires. These values are not identity politics. They are the historic natural rights that we have as individuals pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in the world. Pursuing life, liberty, and happiness. The State Department's Human Rights Report has just struck out all references to the rights of LGBTQ people in countries and the way countries treat LGBTQ people. I mean, do they have a right to liberty? Do they have a right to life? Do they have a right to happiness?

Senator Murphy pointed out that the Human Rights Report has taken out information about freedom of association, about freedom of expression, about exploitation of children, about prison conditions. These were all part of the human rights reports that have been done for years by the State Department. I think these are things that are connected to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They have now all been removed from the State Department's annual Human Rights Report. And the notion that, well, we wanted to make it shorter or more readable just does not pass the laugh test with me and many others on this committee.

I am not really going to ask you about your testimony because I believe you offered that in a very sincere way, and I do not want to try to change your opinion something you sincerely believe. But the notion that our rights do not come from our laws or our government should make people very, very nervous because people of any religious tradition, or none, are entitled to the equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. It should not matter what their religious background is, what they think about God or the Creator, what their church affiliation is. You are entitled in this country, every person, to the equal protection of the laws, and so to demean laws and demean governments and suggest that rights do not come from laws and governments—I mean, again, I

think there are such things as natural rights, and I try to live in accord with them, but I would never demean the law. We are a nation of laws, not men; laws, not people. And if we now, after nearly 250 years, suddenly start to demean that or diminish that and suggest, no, it is natural rights as defined by a leader—the leader of Iran or the leader of any nation—that does not create a place of safety or comfort for folks.

Mr. Wilcox, I want to just now move to you quickly. Very important position. I think it might be the largest group of employees within the State Department in Virginia. We care deeply about all the Marine security guards who guard our embassies train at Quantico, the foreign affairs security training centers at Fort Barfoot in southern Virginia that trains our State Department personnel to keep themselves and their families safe. I am a little bit worried about the effect of the massive RIFs in the State Department on the security mission. Can you tell me how you would try to make sure that your division has the resources it needs to get the job done?

Mr. WILCOX. I do apologize, Senator. Could you repeat that question, please?

Senator KAINE. Yes. I am worried about the RIFs, the reductions in force, and the effect of those RIFs on the security mission of the Department of State. Tell me how you would work to make sure that we have the resources we need to—

Mr. WILCOX. Sure.

Senator KAINE [continuing]. Make sure security is job one.

Mr. WILCOX. Yes, sir. I appreciate the question. As you all know, Diplomatic Security was not as impacted as the other bureaus. We are the largest bureau next to Consular Affairs, perhaps, certainly by budget and number of personnel. It is my understanding that only two special agents were RIF'd, and they were not in positions within DS at the time. We did have other security engineers in a few other labor categories that were involuntarily RIF'd. Once confirmed, I am going to do a full assessment, as I said in my opening statement, of the resources, the personnel, and the infrastructure that I have to accomplish our three primary lines of effort, that being embassy operations, dignitary protection, and law enforcement investigations.

There is an impact anytime you conduct a RIF, and we lost 1,300 people on the 13th of July. There is no doubt that impacts morale, and morale is probably more important than any other component in a paramilitary organization, and there should be no mistake that Diplomatic Security is a paramilitary organization with an embedded law enforcement agency, so the morale will be first and foremost in my thoughts.

I think that my style of leadership, my candor, my clearly articulating the expectations and the standards that we set for our personnel will help that. There are a lot of other things we can do in terms of the allocation of personnel and make sure they are right sized against the mission sets, but it will be a key focus of mine, and I will focus keenly on what that impact has been, and I will be candid to the chain of command of what I understand that impact to be.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator——

Mr. BARNES. Mr. Chairman, could I respond to Senator Kaine briefly, if you do not mind?

Senator RISCH. Yes, that would be fine.

Mr. BARNES. Briefly. Senator, thank you for your comments, and I did want to say my daughter was born in your State. I was educated in your State. My fourth child——

Senator Kaine. Washington and Lee.

Mr. BARNES. That is right. My fourth child will be born in your State, Lord willing, in November, so I am grateful for the State of Virginia and your leadership of it.

I did just want to clarify something. I think when Secretary Rubio made that comment that you referenced, when I make it in my statement, prepared statement as well, I am certainly speaking of my faith, but I am also harkening to the Declaration of Independence, right—“endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” So, I—that is what is animating this desire, this kind of driving back.

Senator Kaine. How do you square that with removing all the LGBTQ references in the Human Rights Report?

Mr. BARNES. Well, Senator, I did want to also talk about, and I mentioned to Senator Murphy, the idea of tacking closer to statute and the human rights reports. But I did just want to note that I served for years with Ambassador Brownback in the Religious Freedom Office. I have an incredible respect for other faiths and people who have no faith, and believe we need to be championing those rights. And as you said in your remarks, which I agree with, all are equal, certainly under the law, but these rights that are inherent in human dignity predate the law is I think what we are getting at when we talk about endowed by the Creator. So, thank you for your comments. I just want to clarify that.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Thank you, Mr. Barnes. We really appreciate that.

Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Well, congratulations to each and every one of you. We look forward to all of you serving.

Mr. Bazzi, I have a number of questions for you, and primarily it is because for the last 20 years, Wyoming and Tunisia have shared a strong connection. In 2002, the Wyoming National Guard partnered with Tunisia and the military as part of the Department of Defense’s National Guard State Partnership Program.

So, I have been to Tunisia, worked with our Guard closely, and the military partnership does provide a valuable opportunity for troops to use their skills in the field under real world situations. So, I am going to just exclusively visit with you, so the rest of you take a break. But I am really proud of the incredible work that our Wyoming National Guard has done in Tunisia. They have trained personnel in finding and clearing various types of mines, other explosive materials, helped build classrooms, constructed culverts, carried out engineering projects, work closely together. Can you talk a little bit about how you feel a partnership between Tunisia and Wyoming National Guard, or any State’s national guard, can

contribute to strengthening our bilateral relationship, particularly in areas of military cooperation and professional development?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for the questions, Senator, and I also did meet one of your staffs about a month or so back, and very helpful and offered help if confirmed, some of the things that they can help me with. And one of the things is, I have been reading and talking to various people about the partnership with Wyoming National Guard, and so I started doing homework myself, trying to see. If confirmed, I would love to visit Wyoming and also the National Guard. I was talking to Michigan National Guard, with a couple of people that I know, and I guess they have also great relationship with your National Guard, Michigan National Guard and Wyoming National Guard. And one of the generals, also, he offered a visit with me to Wyoming just to be able to get chance to meet the staff that, if confirmed, I will be working with.

And one of the things with my military experience, I want to get a better idea, obviously once I get read in to see what kind of training, how we are engaged with the Tunisians, what kind programs, you know, counterterrorism. I know there is an issue with fighters coming back into Tunisia, and there are also two neighboring countries, they have fighters coming in or risk of terrorism coming in from two countries that border Tunisia. So, I am very curious to—and also very optimistic about actually meeting with Wyoming National Guard to see what we can do, work together for training and also work with the committee to see what we can do to make sure that area stays stable and safe.

Senator BARRASSO. I agree with you in terms of the risk of terrorism, and when you look at the location and what is so nearby and the impact of that area, I think it is critical.

So, how would you describe—because, I mean, both of the militaries have a field artillery that is similar—UH-60s, C-130s. You know, how would you describe the current state of U.S.-Tunisian relationships today?

Mr. BAZZI. So, from what I know from being a private citizen, Senator—thank you for the question—I have read a lot of great things what the Wyoming National Guard is doing with training Tunisian military, and I have read a lot of things about that. Tunisian military are doing a great job with their counterterrorism with the help of Wyoming National Guard, and that is why I am eager, if confirmed, to actually work—be on the ground, working—boots on the ground working with the National Guard, the committee, and also with the Tunisian military.

Senator BARRASSO. And I think, in general, it builds additional partnerships and friendships because last year, the University of Wyoming signed memorandums of understanding with four Tunisian universities. So, in your opinion, how do academic agreements like these between the University of Wyoming and Tunisian universities, how does that help strengthen the relationship between nations?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for that question, Senator. I have also read, also, the same thing about what—different universities and Wyoming, that they have great partnership also with Tunisia. It is very critical to have that partnership also, and I am also looking forward to, if confirmed, to go to some of the universities in Wyo-

ming and to see what kind of partnership, to see what we can—what we can do, especially as, if confirmed, as a U.S. Ambassador.

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thank you.

Congratulations to all of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you, sir.

Senator RISCH. Ordinarily, Senator Rosen would be up, but I understand you have yielded to Senator Cruz on a temporary basis.

[Laughter.]

Senator ROSEN. Yes. Well, we all have places to go.

Senator RISCH. We do.

Senator ROSEN. It will work out in the long run.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Cruz, you are up.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

I appreciate it, Senator Rosen.

Ms. Hildebrand, last week I traveled to El Salvador, Panama, and Mexico to meet with leaders in those countries and tour facilities that are critical to America's national security. China's encroachment across the region is extensive, it is dangerous, and it has to be acknowledged, a failure that is bipartisan and stretches back decades. Undoubtedly, the Biden administration's policies in this area were a disaster. I sat down with President Bukele, and he described how Biden officials pushed governments across Central and South America toward the Chinese Communist Party. I traveled around the Panama Canal, and saw the vast infrastructure projects the Chinese have been building to seize control of the waterway.

As you said during your prepared testimony, the challenge in Costa Rica is acute. Of all the countries in Central America, Costa Rica maintains the longest standing diplomatic relationships with China, going back to 2007. The CCP has poured billions of dollars into Costa Rica. Nevertheless, Costa Rica remains a critical American ally. It is playing an instrumental role in rebuilding America's alliance system across the hemisphere. There is enormous frustration with CCP coercion across Costa Rica. What policies, in your judgment, can we pursue to help our Costa Rican allies resist Chinese pressure?

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Thank you, Senator Cruz, for your question.

Chinese expansion into the Western Hemisphere is a threat to national security and to our prosperity. We cannot allow the CCP to control our critical supply chains. Maintaining ties with U.S. and Costa Rica is essential. If confirmed, I will work with the Costa Rican government, the public and private sectors, to counter the CCP influence and support their use of trusted vendors, especially when it comes to implementing the 5G technology.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Tell us about how your background has equipped you for this role.

Ms. HILDEBRAND. Thank you, Senator, for your question.

I think my service on boards and philanthropy, as a small business owner, and also being a partner in building multiple large businesses equips me for this role. If I am confirmed, I hope that I take my interests in education and prevention programs for high

risk behaviors and the support that we have lent to organizations that assist those that have been trafficked. I hope to make a difference in those areas at a much higher level if I am confirmed to be the Ambassador to Costa Rica.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Mr. Barnes, I would actually like to go back to the exchange you had with Senator Kaine, and I wish Senator Kaine was still here. Senator Kaine and I were elected together 13 years ago. He is a friend. I would actually encourage observers to go back and listen to what Senator Kaine said because I have to say it, I think, was disturbing and showed much of where today's Democrat Party has gone wrong.

So, Senator Kaine said in this hearing that he found it a radical and dangerous notion that you would say our rights came from God and not from government. I just walked into the hearing as he was saying that, and I almost fell out of my chair because that radical and dangerous notion, in his words, is literally the founding principle upon which the United States of America was created. And if you do not believe me, and you made reference to this, Mr. Barnes, then you can believe perhaps the most prominent Virginian to ever serve, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator," not by government, not by the Democratic National Committee, but by God "with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

I have to say, it is stunning to me that the principle that God has given us natural rights is now deemed by Democrats some radical and dangerous notion. Mr. Jefferson was right when he wrote those words. Government exists to protect those rights, but slavery was not OK when U.S. law allowed it. It was wrong then. It is wrong now. It is always wrong.

I guess I would just ask you, your role is going to be very much a role designed to defend human rights across the globe. Do you agree with what I just said, and what do you think about the concept that the founding principles of America are radical and dangerous? What do you think about that particular notion?

Mr. BARNES. Yes, Senator, I appreciate the question. And I will just say, I think the—one of the ideas behind—we have a new office in DRL, Office of Natural Rights, post the reorganization. I think one of the ideas behind that is you actually have the most consensus behind these natural rights than the kind of maybe hot button issues of the day, and so we should champion those. As Senator Kaine mentioned, all are created equal. We agree with that. That is in the Declaration of Independence, as is in endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator ROSEN.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Risch, and of course, Ranking Member Shaheen.

I really appreciate our witnesses.

I know that many of your families are here. I can tell by their smiling behind you, so appreciate your willingness to serve. Thank you for being with us today.

I am going to build a little bit on what Senator Barrasso talked about, his comments on Tunisia, because it is really important that we counter violent extremism in Tunisia. I was in Morocco a few years ago, been in the region, and we know that there is a lot of extremism going on, as you alluded to.

So, over the past decade, factors like inadequate social services, limited economic opportunities, they have been drawing Tunisians to violence and extremism in the Middle East, and of course, beyond. Reports indicate that the number of young Tunisians who joined ISIS was the highest of all Arabs and Muslim nationalities—the highest—young people from Tunisia, yet this Administration has terminated critical programs that counter violent extremism—we call them CVE—in Tunisia, including a \$60 million investment to improve youth access to opportunities for civic engagement, economic empowerment, so they do not join a group like ISIS. These types of vital programs, they target these root causes of extremism. They prevent the vulnerable populations from being recruited to terrorist organizations. We know this to be fundamental.

So, Mr. Bazzi, given your military experience and your other life experience, you have seen firsthand the consequences of extremism. Do you agree that CVE programs are critical to combating extremism in places like Tunisia and of course other places around the world, and if confirmed, would you advocate for programs like the one I just mentioned?

Mr. BAZZI. Thank you for the question, Senator. Yes, with my prior military experience I have seen what extremism and terrorism do to, you know, any country. It just destroys its fabric, everything, especially for us in the United States. We have to go back and have to work extra hard to change things. If confirmed, I want to be on the ground working with the government counterparts to see what the issues are, what their concerns, and I am a hands on person. I want to sit and talk to a lot of people in the civil society, you know, the youth, you know, colleges. I want to visit, you know, every place I can get a chance to visit to see what the issues, what the concerns, and I can relay that to our Administration, see what is needed in Tunisia.

Senator ROSEN. Well, it is easy to know that desperate people, in order to take care of their family, will turn to those with obviously terrorists or unsavory thoughts and unsavory actions that they want to do. As we see, when people are desperate, they turn out of desperation to take care of themselves. This is one of the factors that causes those young men and women to join ISIS, but so thank you. I look forward to working with you on that.

I want to turn now to Mr. Barnes and talk about labor protections, please, and it is no secret that the State Department has increasingly focused its attention toward advancing economic interests of the U.S. businesses abroad, which is something that would, on face value, enjoy bipartisan support, but it is equally important the Department maintains its effort to push for stronger labor practices and protections for workers overseas.

I want U.S. businesses to thrive, and we are talking about our values, and oh, they are endowed, and are we a nation of laws. We can be endowed by our Creator, but we still are a nation of laws, and we do have separation of church and state because people do have different opinions. That is not what a question I am asking you. I want businesses to thrive, but we cannot compromise our values, the values that you believe are endowed by our Creator: values of dignity, of safety, of life, liberty, pursuit of happiness.

So, how do we allow businesses to thrive without compromising our values, Mr. Barnes? We cannot turn the other way if unacceptable labor practices are staring us in the face. If confirmed, how will you balance economic interest of U.S. firms abroad while safeguarding the rights of some of the most vulnerable populations around the globe that often make up these work forces in low and middle income countries? Please.

Mr. BARNES. Senator Rosen, thank you for your question and for your interest in that topic.

You know, the Labor Office that we have in DRL—again, I am not currently serving in DRL, but this is a big focus of theirs, and it is because I think that office really is at the intersection of economic interests and human rights interests because if other countries and governments are coming up, bringing up in their labor regulations and their labor laws to protect people who are working there. That is good for American businesses and American companies who have—I think, typically, are setting the world—the gold standard for labor issues. So, certainly, it is part hearing from industry, it is part having these conversations with partner governments around the world and raising these concerns, and as I mentioned with Senator Ricketts, talking to other like minded countries who could exert influence or have these conversations with other countries as well. Thank you.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Hour is getting late, but without getting too far in the weeds, I want to come back to you, Mr. Wilcox, briefly.

The issue that is important to both Senator Shaheen and I, and I think for America really, is the two countries that are trying to get their feet under them. One is Syria, and one is Lebanon, key, key countries in the Middle East going through some real changes right now, and we have issues regarding the embassies in both countries. In Lebanon, they are building a new one, but they are a couple years behind. I think need some work there. Syria, the people in Syria really want an open embassy there. Again we are struggling there to get our feet under us. It is important we get both of those up and running. It is really important where we fly the flag in every country, there is no question about it, and those embassies play a critical role. Obviously, in the position you are in, well, in both of those, security is a real issue.

Help me out. Where are we? What can you tell me about where we are in both those? I have talked to Secretary Rubio about it. I have talked to Tom Barrack about it, who is the special envoy for the two countries. What say you?

Mr. WILCOX. I appreciate the question, Senator, and Senator Shaheen, I look forward to understanding your experiences when

you were on the ground there. I understand that some of our DS personnel were there, and I—

Senator SHAHEEN. They were great.

Mr. WILCOX. I really look forward to your feedback on that trip. Return to embassy operations is going to be critical both in Syria and Lebanon as Lebanon gets stood back up, Libya as well, and eventually Sanaa. I think the work that this committee has done and the bipartisan work that you have done on SACA 22, the Embassy in a Box, and the ARV legislation, will give us the capability to execute smart risk management on the ground. And I know that is something that is going to fall to me in making recommendations to the Secretary on what that force structure looks like.

We are currently, as I understand it, and I have been briefed, that we are currently accompanying Ambassador Barrack on the ground in and out of Syria, and so we have a limited capability to engage with the fledgling government in Syria. Now, I cannot speak authoritatively to what that force structure will look like or what that cost will be, but it will be significant as we return to operations in Syria.

There is obviously an increased threat to our personnel on the ground once we have a permanent presence there, and we are going to have to take that threat seriously, and so there will be a thorough assessment of what those threats look like. We will take every action to mitigate those, but we will be coming back to Congress for that funding in the next fiscal year. I can only tell you that I know that we are engaged currently, and that we are making trips from Aman, and that those trips are ongoing as need be, driven by the chief of mission and his threat assessment and the recommendations of our RSO.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. I appreciate that, and as you know, ISIS has had way too much of a free reign in Syria, and they remain a threat there simply because the government is a fledgling government and does not have the capacity to completely deal with ISIS as it should. So, that is going to be a challenge for you, but glad to hear that is on your radar, and we will look forward to how you move forward.

Mr. WILCOX. It is, Senator, and I would point out that we have strong interagency relationships with Tier 1 special mission unit organizations that are operating there, CENTCOM as well, and we have liaison partners and our officers working hand in hand, both in our operations center and in the operation center in CENTCOM.

Senator RISCH. Well, the security there will certainly be an enhanced rate than it is in a lot of countries even in—even in that region, so we appreciate your work in that regard.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just second those comments about Syria. I think it is not only in the United States' interest, but it is in the region's interest to have a stable Syria. And I think if we can get the Caesar sanctions lifted, and I applaud President Trump for coming out in support of doing that, that will help because it will encourage commerce and a free flow of people and material going in and out of the country. So, I am hopeful that Congress can get that done this fall.

So, I want to go to you, Mr. Negrea. We do not want to let you get through this hearing without having to answer any question at all. And I am concerned about the review of the United States' involvement in international organizations because I fear that refusing to pay our dues at the U.N. and other organizations and withdrawing is really going to hamstring our ability to counter the PRC. As you know, at ECOSOC, the PRC is increasingly using its position to block legitimate NGOs and human rights defenders from accessing U.N. facilities. At the same time, it is deploying government organized NGOs that they have chosen that reshaped the narrative on China's human rights abuses and intimidate those who speak out. So, can you talk a little bit about how you envision addressing that kind of PRC influence at an organization like ECOSOC?

Mr. NEGREA. Thank you for your question, Senator, and again, for not letting me go through without any question whatsoever.

It would be my priority number one to address the threat that China represents to U.S. interests at the U.N. China is our most significant adversary, probably the most dangerous adversary that the United States has ever had in its history in so many domains in diplomacy: in the field of ideas, in the field of military contest, and also in economic matters. All these aspects are reflected at the United Nations. United Nations is unique in providing a platform where we can present our vision of development for the countries around the world.

A hundred and 20 of the 190 countries at the United Nations are developing countries. China is presenting its vision for development, which is an authoritarian development vision. We want and we will present our vision, which is based on freedom. Countries should want to have freedom inspired reforms in their countries to create an enabling environment in which the private sector of the United States will come to do business, and this is a mutually beneficial relationship where the United States benefits. Companies in the United States will see jobs and wealth for doing business, and the countries themselves—developing countries will benefit.

Senator SHAHEEN. I am sorry to interrupt you, but I understand that philosophy, and I agree with much of it, but if we are not at the table, if we do not have the United States represented in international organizations, then how can we advocate for that philosophy and for what we need to do, and that is the question that I am asking you. Given the review of whether we should participate, how do you make the argument to those countries who see China there, who have seen increased presence from China, who see the U.S. withdrawing, that we are still there, we are still interested in what they are doing and want to support the efforts in those developing countries?

Mr. NEGREA. Thank you for your question, Senator.

The United—following Executive Order 14199 from President Trump, we withdrew from a number of international organizations, and we are reviewing our involvement in others, and I expect a result of the review anytime soon. I think the organizations from which we withdrew, we were very well justified to do so. For example, UNESCO, President Reagan withdrew from—

Senator SHAHEEN. I am really not asking you about the justification. What I am asking you is how we make the argument on behalf of the United States if we are not there, and you have not—you have not really answered how you see being able to do that.

Mr. NEGREA. Senator, there are organizations in which we should not be involved. UNESCO, for example, recognizes Palestine as a state. There is a statute on the books that says that United States may not fund institutions, international organizations, where Palestine is recognized as a state. President Reagan withdrew us from there, and under President Obama, we did not pay our fees.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, I am very aware of that. Thank you. You have not really answered my question, but I appreciate the argument that you are making.

I would like to make a final point, however, because one of—one of the important initiatives of ECOSOC is the Commission on the Status of Women. The Trump administration has sought to weaken or remove longstanding provisions that encourage member states in the U.N. to expand the role of women in peacekeeping and diplomacy. It is well documented that societies that empower women are more stable, that women in those societies give back more to their families, to their communities, and to their countries.

So, one of the pieces of legislation that I helped to champion that was signed in the first Trump administration was legislation on women, peace, and security that recognized that important role of women in society. So I hope—excuse me—that if confirmed you will support striking that language that would remove women's roles in peace and security.

And I would just point out for you, Mr. Barnes, that it is very disappointing that in the effort to shorten our human rights reports, that not just freedom of assembly was removed, but free and fair elections, violence and discrimination against women, and sexual violence against children were also removed. I would hope that we are going to—if you are confirmed, that you will look at ways in which you can restore information about how women and children are treated in societies as we are trying to encourage countries around the world about the values of ensuring that the human rights of all individuals are protected.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator.

With that, we are going to close the meeting. Before I do, I am going to order that any letters of support or otherwise the committees receive regarding any of the nominees be included in the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The referenced information was not received at press time.]

Senator RISCH. Also, for the information of the committee, I will keep the record open until close of business tomorrow, 5 p.m., September 4, so members can submit questions. If you get one, I would appreciate if you would answer it as quickly as you can. It will help in the confirmation process.

And with that, thank you to all of you for your willingness to serve, and a special thank you to your families who will support you with that.

And with that, committee is adjourned.
 [Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MELINDA HILDEBRAND BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What are your views on Chinese involvement in Costa Rica?

Answer. I understand the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to influence Costa Rican policies, institutions, and the public, often through a mixture of threats, incentives, and misleading or inaccurate information. If confirmed, I will closely monitor China's engagement in Costa Rica while reaffirming the strength of the U.S.-Costa Rica partnership. I will underscore the importance of transparent, reliable partners that safeguard Costa Rica's sovereignty and support our shared democratic values. Costa Rica has taken several principled steps toward securing their country against malign Chinese influence, such as selecting trusted vendors for their telecommunications network and increasing law enforcement exchanges with Taiwan.

Question. What practical measures would you recommend to reduce Chinese technological and financial influence?

Answer. I understand the U.S. government has been effective in partnering with Costa Rica to resist CCP technological and financial influence in Costa Rica. If confirmed, I will seek to continue and strengthen those efforts. I will highlight the mutual benefits of U.S. and partner engagement that offer transparent, high-standard alternatives to PRC financing and technology. I will also encourage Costa Rica to continue to pursue secure options that protect its data and communication networks.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MELINDA HILDEBRAND BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Earlier this year, Costa Rica signed an MOU with the United States committing to receive U.S. deportees from third countries. Costa Rica has since received 200 third country nationals from the United States, including vulnerable populations, such as women and children who do not speak the local language, straining public resources and sparking domestic criticism. If confirmed, how will you work to ensure these populations are properly supported and that this arrangement does not undermine confidence in the United States?

Answer. I understand Costa Rica has been a good partner and worked closely with the United States on the return of the 200 third-country nationals. I will engage Government of Costa Rica officials to ensure they receive deportees in a manner consistent with both U.S. law and applicable bilateral agreements or arrangements.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to engage with the government of Costa Rica and this Committee regarding the safety and well-being of third country nationals who are deported to Costa Rica and are unaccounted for or do not return to their country of origin?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will engage with the Government of Costa Rica and this Committee to ensure that third-country nationals deported to Costa Rica from the United States are received in a manner consistent with U.S. law and applicable bilateral agreements or arrangements.

Question. Your financial interest in the oil and gas industry have raised concerns in Costa Rica that your appointment may signal the Trump Administration's interest in encouraging petroleum exploration, despite the country's moratorium on drilling. Have you or any member of your family had any conversations with President Trump or Secretary Rubio about your family's oil interests in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer. No. Neither I nor any member of my family have had conversations with President Trump or Secretary Rubio about our family's oil interests in the Western Hemisphere. My family's commercial petroleum companies are focused exclusively on the United States as a domestic exploration company. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remain vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations. I will divest any investments the State Department Ethics Office deems necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question. What steps have you taken to ensure that you have properly distanced yourself from family companies that might be operating in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer. I have and will continue to fully follow the guidance of the Department's ethics officials and the Office of Government Ethics to ensure that I am appropriately distanced from any family business interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BILL BAZZI BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The United States and Tunisia have a strong, enduring relationship that dates back over 200 years.

If confirmed, what will be your strategic priorities for Tunisia policy?

Answer. President Trump and Secretary Rubio have been clear that U.S. foreign policy must be focused on making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. This will guide my approach.

I look forward to building on over 200 years of friendship with Tunisia to advance our shared interests, including countering terrorism, containing illegal immigration, and forging enduring economic and cultural ties.

Question. Unfortunately, the US-Tunisia relationship has been strained over the last few years by harassment of U.S. citizens and Tunisians who engage with the U.S. embassy in Tunis as well as with the U.S. Congress. Any restriction on or retaliation against individuals who visit the U.S. embassy or engage with our government is completely unacceptable.

Will you commit, if confirmed, to actively engage on behalf of any U.S. citizen detained by Tunisian law enforcement to ensure they are not potentially wrongfully or unlawfully detained, receive just treatment, and are provided swift access to consular services?

Answer. The Department of State has no higher priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens at home and overseas. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Government of Tunisia to ensure it upholds its consular obligations to U.S. citizens and respects and protects their rights.

Question. Will you commit to keeping this committee informed in a timely manner of any potential cases of wrongful detention and unjust treatment?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Will you commit to strongly convey the importance of access to the U.S. embassy without fear of retaliation?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If the Tunisian government resumed threats of retaliation for meeting with U.S. embassy officials, how would you respond?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to always engaging Tunisian counterparts to promote U.S. interests and values, including the importance of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as provided for in the Tunisian constitution. I will not shy away from raising concerns with the Government of Tunisia when we have them.

Question. Do you commit to keeping this committee informed of any such threats?

Answer. Yes.

Question. The United States has a strong security relationship with Tunisia. Unfortunately, democratic backsliding by Tunisia's political leadership leading to forced expulsions and violent crack downs on free speech and assembly have increased scrutiny on the security relationship. To date, the U.S. Government has found no evidence that our security support has contributed to these concerning activities.

If confirmed, will you vigilantly monitor actions by the Tunisian armed forces and law enforcement to ensure U.S. support does not contribute to infringement of free speech and assembly?

Answer. Yes, I will ensure our efforts promote a secure, prosperous Tunisia with which we can cooperate, eliminating threats to both our borders and projecting stability in the region. If confirmed, I commit to always engaging Tunisian counterparts to promote U.S. objectives and values, including the importance of respecting the fundamental freedom of peaceful assembly, which governments have the obligation to protect under international law. I will not shy away from raising concerns with the Government of Tunisia when we have them.

Question. Do you believe security assistance should be used as leverage in response to concerning actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure assistance is used for purposes consistent with U.S. objectives. I will work to strengthen the bilateral military relationship to promote our national security interests. U.S. assistance is but one tool that can be used to encourage action consistent with U.S. objectives.

Question. How would you balance U.S. national security interests with American values and support for natural rights? Please be detailed in your response.

Answer. President Trump and Secretary Rubio have been clear that U.S. foreign policy must be focused on making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Tunisia is a Major non-NATO Ally and deeply engaged in the fight against terrorism in Tunisia and throughout the region. Tunisians guard against instability emanating from Libya and the Sahel, and they provide important airlift support for U.S. activities in the region, conducting missions that support U.S. Government goals and would cost the U.S. military twice as much to complete.

At the same time, we will be sure to raise concerns when we have them, approaching our Tunisian counterparts in a respectful dialogue, while balancing the critical support Tunisia provides as they burden share in the region. I commit to urging Tunisian counterparts to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BILL BAZZI BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. In February 2024, you condemned the Biden Administration's handling of the Israel-Gaza conflict. As we sit here, Netanyahu has begun its invasion of Gaza City—with no visible push back from this administration. Are you concerned about these developments?

Answer. President Trump has consistently said he wants peace in the region. If confirmed, I will work to advance the President Trump and Secretary Rubio's pursuit of peace.

Question. How do you think the Tunisian public will react to an Israeli occupation of Gaza and do you believe an occupation of Gaza is in our national interest?

Answer. The Tunisian public has always been strongly pro-Palestinian. President Trump has consistently said he wants peace in Gaza and if confirmed, I look forward to supporting his agenda.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BILL BAZZI BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. The U.S. Embassy in Tunisia hosts a highly successful teacher education exchange program, providing a unique opportunity for teachers in Tunisia specializing in English to participate in professional development programs based at a U.S. university. Yet this administration has cut, withheld, and rescinded funding for cultural diplomacy efforts such as Educational and Cultural Exchange programs, including teacher education exchange programs.

If confirmed, will you openly support and strongly advocate for Education and Cultural Exchange programs between the U.S. and Tunisia?

Answer. The Department's educational and cultural exchange programs continue to be tools for advancing the Administration's priorities. President Trump and Secretary Rubio have been clear: U.S. foreign policy must make America safer, strong-

er, and more prosperous. These are principles I will use to guide our approach to Tunisia.

If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about our educational outreach in Tunisia through American Corners, EducationUSA advising services, and American English programs, as well as through our Fulbright Specialist programs, promote America as a global leader in business, innovation, STEM research, higher education, American English language instruction, and culture.

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure that the current teacher education exchange program continues to operate and function?

Answer. While I am not currently part of funding discussions on specific programs, if confirmed, I will be sure to advocate for the resources required for the United States to achieve its objectives in Tunisia.

If confirmed, I will work with the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and others within State to implement public diplomacy programming that advances the United States as the partner of choice in Tunisia and advances our foreign policy objectives with the Tunisian people.

Question. According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) (Feb 10, 2025 report), Tunisia is experiencing instability driven by President Kais Saied's consolidation of power, suppression of political opposition, and erosion of democratic institutions. Compounding this, the U.S. Government under the Trump administration significantly decreased its aid to Tunisia in 2025, ending many, if not all, democracy-focused programs.

In light of Tunisia's ongoing democratic backsliding and the Trump administration's termination of democracy programs, what specific U.S. programs remain available to support Tunisians working to strengthen democratic practices in their country?

Answer. While I am not currently part of funding discussions, if confirmed, I will be sure to advocate for the resources required for the United States to achieve its objectives in Tunisia.

Question. What tools and programs do you plan to use to promote anti-corruption efforts and to support civil society in Tunisia?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting and working with Tunisians from across the government, private sector, and civil society to advance shared U.S.-Tunisian interests. I will ensure every dollar the United States spends on Tunisia gives us an unequivocal return on investment to advance these interests, including through vital tools such as assistance and private messaging.

Question. The Trump administration has terminated several U.S. aid programs in Tunisia. Terminated programs include:

- Power Tunisia (\$24.5 million): An energy transition program to reduce Tunisia's dependence on Algerian gas.
- Visit Tunisia (\$50 million): Designed to revive the tourist sector and boost employment.
- Naseej Project (\$25 million): A project that focused on combatting inequality for women in the agricultural sector.

In the absence of these programs, what U.S. Government resources will you rely on to develop and strengthen U.S.-Tunisia efforts to combat inequality for women in the agricultural sector?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to encourage private sector investment across Tunisia to deepen the economic ties between the United States and Tunisia.

Question. Is reducing Tunisia's dependence on Algerian gas still a priority for the State Department?

Answer. As I understand it, Tunisia's choice of energy sources is its own sovereign decision.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BILL BAZZI BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. Tunisians, like many across the region, are strongly opposed to the Netanyahu government's war on Gaza and view U.S. policy skeptically. If confirmed, how would you address these challenges of policy and public perception in Tunisia?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting and working with Tunisians from across the government, private sector, and civil society to advance shared U.S.-Tunisian interests. My priority would be a respectful and constructive dialogue with Tunisian counterparts to advance U.S. policies in the region.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TODD WILCOX BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Beginning in July 2023, I repeatedly asked the State Department for information relating to former Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley and the conditions surrounding Diplomatic Security's revocation of his security clearance. Unfortunately, the Biden State Department repeatedly refused my formal request for information which they admitted to me, in person, they possessed.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing this committee with full access to the details of the allegations against Mr. Malley?

Answer. As a private citizen, I have seen media reports of allegations that Special Envoy for Iran Rob Malley's security clearance was suspended. I have no insight into the conditions that may have led to that decision or the Department's non-disclosure of detailed information. I take Congress's oversight role and your concerns seriously. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Committee and others in Congress to share appropriate information and to be as transparent as possible, while protecting employees' privacy and the integrity of any ongoing investigative processes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TODD WILCOX BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Immigration and Law Enforcement

Question. What is the scope of Diplomatic Security agents' role in assisting Federal law enforcement efforts in DC and what is your understanding of who or which agency DS agents report to for this assignment?

Answer. I understand that Diplomatic Security Service special agents participating in the DC Safe and Beautiful Task Force are temporarily detailed to the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) pursuant to a detail arrangement between the Department of State and USMS. While on these details, agents are acting in coordination with and under the guidance or assistance of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or other Federal law enforcement agencies that regularly enforce the D.C. criminal code.

Question. What role do you think Diplomatic Security should play in coordinating or supporting Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on arrests of immigrants and deportations?

Answer. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) is committed to supporting execution of the President's Executive Order, Securing Our Borders (dated January 20, 2025) ("Executive Order"). DS special agents investigate cases of passport fraud, which often result in identifying illegal immigrants. Along these lines, DS's mission closely aligns with the mission of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In February 2025, DHS delegated limited authority to DS special agents to assist with immigration enforcement, including the investigation, location, and apprehension of individuals violating Title 8, Chapter 12 of the U.S. Code.

Question. What role do you think Diplomatic Security should play in assisting with investigations into human trafficking or identifying potential human traffickers?

Answer. As I understand it, recent legislation expanded the investigative mandate of the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) to include investigating transnational human trafficking violations as defined in Chapter 77 of Title 18. This authority covers offenses where part of the conduct occurred outside the United States or involved foreign nationals. Diplomatic Security special agents also collaborate with other Federal law enforcement and receiving nation law enforcement to detect and dismantle transnational criminal organizations engaged in trafficking and smuggling.

Question. If confirmed, will you evaluate and report back to this Committee on the scope of DS resources being used for Federal law enforcement efforts in DC (or other cities) and for supporting DHS and ICE, and the impact on DS resources to carry out its central mission?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will evaluate the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's resources, their utilization, and fulfill my responsibility to respond to congressional inquiries.

Resources

Question. Even before the recent largescale termination of personnel in July 2025, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security struggled to fully support missions overseas following the end of the Overseas Contingency Operations account. How do the recent reductions in DS staff align with the Department's highest priority—the safety and security of Department personnel and their families overseas?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority is to assess the personnel and resources necessary to accomplish our core missions of embassy security overseas, dignitary protection, and the full array of domestic law enforcement operations undertaken by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS). I look forward to working closely with the leadership team within the Bureau, and with other Department stakeholders, to make certain that DS has the people needed to properly carry out its security missions and law and immigration enforcement responsibilities.

Question. Diplomatic Security Technical Specialists and Security Engineering Officers were among those who were recently fired on July 11. Some would have gone on to serve at mission critical and hardship posts. How will the loss of these personnel impact security at posts?

Answer. As a nominee, I do not have information on specific personnel assignments. However, if confirmed, communicating with the Secretary about all aspects of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's mission will be one of my top priorities. I understand that, pursuant to statute, the Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security has a direct line of reporting to Secretary Rubio as threats and circumstances dictate, and that reporting structure has been in place since 2016. If confirmed, I intend to keep my entire chain of command informed of any potential negative impacts to overseas security.

Management

Question. What is the role of Diplomatic Security Technical Specialists and Security Engineering Officers?

Answer. Security Engineering Officers (SEO) and Security Technical Specialists (STS) play vital roles in supporting our post security programs worldwide. SEOs manage technical and information security, conduct security assessments, plan technical surveillance countermeasures, and oversee secure facilities and personnel from technical espionage, acts of terrorism and other threats. Meanwhile, STSs ensure the functionality of critical security systems by installing, maintaining, and troubleshooting equipment such as alarms, access controls, and X-ray detection systems. These professionals serve an essential function to safeguarding U.S. Government personnel, facilities, and information against evolving threats.

Protection of U.S. Officials

Question. What steps will you take to ensure that former U.S. officials targeted by our adversaries are protected and that protection for former U.S. officials is not a partisan issue?

Answer. Pursuant to the authority under section 7034(k)(5) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024, as carried forward by the fiscal year 2025 Continuing Appropriations Act, protective services may be provided to former or retired senior Department of State officials or employees that the Secretary of State determines, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, face a serious and credible threat from a foreign power arising from duties performed while employed by the Department. Any such determination will be transmitted to congressional leadership and the appropriate congressional committees, to include justification for the provision of protective services by the Department.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TODD WILCOX BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Over the last several months, the Trump Administration has diverted critical Federal law enforcement resources away from their core missions, such as investigating human trafficking, prosecuting complex financial crime, and in the case of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service, protecting our nation's diplomats at home and abroad. Instead of engaging in this critical work, our law enforcement have been forced to engage in low-level immigration enforcement actions focused on people without a criminal record and people standing near tourist attractions here in Washington, DC.

Question. Is there a specific inter-agency cooperation agreement between ICE and the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service? If so, what are the details of that agreement?

Answer. In February 2025, the Department of Homeland Security delegated limited authority to Diplomatic Security Service special agents to assist with apprehension of individuals who are violating Title 8, Chapter 12 of the U.S. Code.

Question. Where can the public and Members of Congress access the details of this agreement?

Answer. As a private citizen, I do not yet know all the specific details regarding the agreement with the Department of Homeland Security.

Question. What specific training have Diplomatic Security agents received about community policing best practices and constitutional rights?

Answer. I do not yet know all the specific training Diplomatic Security Service (DS) special agents receive as I am not involved in the operations of DS pending confirmation, but if confirmed, I will ensure that DS special agents continue to receive the training relevant to the work they perform.

Question. How can the public be assured that the Diplomatic Security Service is able to fulfil its important mission when so many of its agents have been diverted to a job they have not been trained to do?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review all the efforts being undertaken by the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) to ensure DSS is and remains fully capable of fulfilling its critical missions of safeguarding U.S. personnel, facilities, and interests worldwide and domestically, and conducting criminal investigations in matters where it is charged to do so.

Question. If confirmed, would you reinstate comprehensive surveillance detection programs at U.S. embassies and consulates?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do a full assessment of all security programs including surveillance detection to ensure the safety and security of our overseas personnel, while working closely with Bureau and Department leadership.

Question. If so, what steps would you take to reinstate these programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do a full assessment of surveillance detection to ensure the safety and security of our overseas personnel, while working closely with Bureau and Department leadership.

Question. What measures would you support to close the gap created by the reduction in Surveillance Detection programs, particularly regarding the safety of diplomatic personnel and their families in off-compound locations?

Answer. Keeping U.S. personnel overseas safe is a dynamic and ever-evolving process. If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's efforts to reduce the risks inherent in diplomatic work and realign available resources to identified security priorities, while continuing to find efficiencies across the enterprise security platform and identifying gaps, if any.

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security faces a growing resource deficit. While its protective role has expanded in response to rising threat levels, the budget has not kept pace. This mismatch strains Diplomatic Security's capacity to cover additional protective details, leaving security gaps that need to be closed.

Question. In your estimation, what steps need to be taken to close this gap and address DS resource shortfalls?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority is to assess the resource requirements necessary to accomplish the core missions of embassy security overseas, dignitary protection, and the full array of domestic law enforcement operations undertaken by the Bu-

reau of Diplomatic Security (DS). I look forward to working closely with the leadership team within the Bureau and with other Department stakeholders to ensure that DS has the resources necessary to properly carry out its security missions and law enforcement responsibilities and identify gaps, if any.

In a 2016 interview with the Miami Herald, while running for Senate, you stated waterboarding was not torture and blamed the White House for limiting the country's ability to gain intelligence from alleged terrorists. You were quoted saying, "I can tell you that the enhanced interrogation techniques that have since been banned by this administration—specifically waterboarding—work . . . They work on the terrorists, and there's a proven history of that."

Question. Do you still support enhanced interrogation tactics and techniques?

Answer. No. I have reviewed the Department's policy, which I understand was developed in coordination with and approved by the Attorney General, and commit to ensuring that armed DS personnel continue to adhere to Department policy. The Department's policy is consistent with Federal law, including the Detainee Treatment Act which specifically requires that "no individual in the custody or under the physical control of the U.S. Government, regardless of nationality or physical location, shall be subject to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment." 42 U.S.C. 2000dd(a).

If confirmed, I will adhere to all applicable laws.

Question. Do you believe that waterboarding should be used by the U.S. Government during interrogations?

Answer. No. If confirmed, I will adhere to all applicable laws and I will commit to ensuring that armed DS personnel continue to adhere to the Department's policies.

Question. If confirmed, you will lead the Federal law enforcement agency with the largest overseas footprint.

Considering your previous support for enhanced interrogation methods, including waterboarding, do you commit to upholding Diplomatic Security's current "Use of Force policy" both domestically and abroad?

Answer. Yes. I understand that the Department's use of force policy was developed in coordination with and approved by the Attorney General, and that all Diplomatic Security (DS) agents are required to receive related training on it. If confirmed, I will ensure that DS personnel continue to abide by this important policy domestically and, in coordination with the Chiefs of Mission, while overseas.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TODD WILCOX BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. It is deeply concerning that DHS Secretary Noem signed a memorandum on February 20 deputizing up to 600 special agents within the State Department's Diplomatic Security (DS) Service to help across the country with arresting and deporting illegal immigrants. When National Guard troops deployed to Washington, DC, in August, DS agents were alongside. These developments raise fundamental questions about mission drift and the weakening of diplomatic security as DS resources are diverted away from their traditional responsibilities to domestic operations.

Do you support DS agents stepping away from their core mission of protecting U.S. diplomatic missions and personnel to assist ICE or the National Guard in Washington, DC, or elsewhere in the United States?

Answer. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's resources and their utilization.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DAN NEGREA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, how will you refocus the U.S. approach to ECOSOC, including ridding the U.N. of the woke ideologies of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other divisive ideas?

Answer. The U.N. must return to its founding mission of promoting peace and security around the world. If confirmed, I will work to move the institution back toward this mission and advance President Trump's America-first, peace-through-strength foreign policy.

This means aggressively advocating for organizations to return to their core mandates and operational purviews. For example, we won't be discussing wars in scientific bodies, and we won't be discussing climate change in trade bodies.

Question. What should the U.S. prioritize in ECOSOC?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be a vocal advocate for the Administration's priorities in ECOSOC. Those priorities include working to implement and promote the President's priorities, as outlined in his Executive Orders, across the U.N. system and countering authoritarian influence, especially from China, across key U.N. agencies and governing bodies.

Above all, I will ensure that every engagement at the U.N. is to advance U.S. interests and ensure our nation is safer, more secure, and more prosperous. If confirmed, I will work to promote U.S. values and priorities on critical security, economic, and political issues.

Question. ECOSOC lacks policymaking authority and influence, leaving many member states to question its value. If confirmed, what reforms would you work to implement to right-size and refocus ECOSOC for all member states?

Answer. The U.N. has strayed from its founding mission, and we must demand better. If confirmed, I will work to hold the U.N. accountable and demand the highest standards of transparency, efficiency, professionalism, and integrity of the institution. This includes eliminating redundant mandates and significantly streamlining the U.N. budget and staff footprint.

Question. If confirmed, what will be your priorities for pushing back against Chinese malign influence in ECOSOC and the U.N. system more broadly?

Answer. The United States needs a long-term strategy to prevent China from using the U.N. to advance its interests at the expense of other states as well as setting norms and standards that undermine U.S. interests. That strategy must involve working closely with our partners and allies. If confirmed, working to develop and implement such a strategy will be one of my key priorities.

Question. What are the U.S.'s most effective tools for countering Chinese influence at the UN?

Answer. Candidates from the United States and allied countries need to win elections to key leadership posts in the U.N. We also need to increase qualified American representation throughout the U.N. system. This is particularly important in the specialized agencies where China has been increasingly active.

If confirmed, I will leverage bilateral and multilateral partnerships to advance U.S. interests to counter China's influence in international organizations. I will confront CCP ideological language and messaging, which attempt to normalize its authoritarian actions and human rights violations and abuses. Additionally, I will push back on the CCP's inroads in developing countries.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DAN NEGREA BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Women and Girls

Question. The Commission on the Status of Women is a functional commission of ECOSOC, serving as the principal intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. In negotiations over the Commission's political declaration earlier this year, the United States worked with Russia, Argentina and others to strike language promoting efforts to achieve gender parity at the U.N. In particular, the Administration sought to weaken or remove longstanding provisions encouraging member states and the U.N. to expand the role of women in peacekeeping and diplomacy. If confirmed, would you support the striking of language related to enhancing women's roles in peace and security?

Answer. The Trump Administration is committed to defending the rights, empowerment, and dignity of women in multilateral fora. The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was adopted under the first Trump Administration—the first comprehensive domestic law in the world on this issue. Consistent with the 2017

WPS Act, the United States supports increasing the meaningful participation of women in U.N. peace operations.

If confirmed, I will continue to push for Administration priorities at the Commission on the Status of Women.

Question. How does striking this language align with the requirements of the Women, Peace and Security Act?

Answer. Promoting the rights and empowerment of women and girls is a longstanding cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, and supports the President's vision of a safer, stronger, and more prosperous America. The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was adopted under the first Trump Administration—the first comprehensive domestic law in the world on this issue.

The Trump Administration is committed to defending the rights, empowerment, and dignity of women in multilateral fora. The United States uses multilateral diplomacy to advance American interests and influence, including to promote the rights and empowerment of women and girls globally.

Consistent with the 2017 WPS Act, the United States supports increasing the meaningful participation of women in U.N. peace operations. If confirmed, I will remain dedicated to champion all aspects of the Women, Peace, and Security Act. Supporting women's participation in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict reduces costs to American taxpayers and preserves American strength.

Humanitarian Activities

Question. The world is experiencing an unprecedented humanitarian and displacement crisis. From Ukraine to Gaza to Sudan, humanitarian needs and the challenges of safely delivering humanitarian assistance, are growing. At the same time, the Trump Administration is seeking to drastically reduce its humanitarian budget. How will you work within ECOSOC and other U.N. humanitarian agencies to improve global responses and resourcing for humanitarian crises?

Answer. The United States is not ceasing foreign assistance; we are realigning our programs to ensure they are more effective and aligned with our national interests.

Essential lifesaving and humanitarian programs will continue, and we will make strategic investments that strengthen our partners and our own country. The United States expects capable countries to increase their share of the burden of live-saving foreign aid globally. If confirmed, I will continue to support these efforts.

Question. ECOSOC plays a key role in facilitating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Trump Administration has stated that it “rejects and denounces” the SDGs. The Counselor for ECOSOC, Edward Heartney, said earlier this year to the U.N. General Assembly: “Agenda 2030 and the SDGs advance a program of soft global governance that is inconsistent with U.S. sovereignty and adverse to the rights and interests of Americans.” Do you believe that advancing economic development globally is inconsistent with US sovereignty and adverse to the rights and interests of Americans?

Answer. The U.N. must return to its founding mission of promoting peace and security around the world. If confirmed, I will work to move the institution back toward this mission and advance President Trump's America-First, peace-through-strength foreign policy.

This means aggressively advocating for organizations to return to their core mandates and operational purviews. For example, we won't be discussing wars in scientific bodies, and we won't be discussing climate change in trade bodies.

UN Funding and Countering the PRC

Question. The Trump Administration's proposed fiscal year 2026 budget zeroes out all US assessed contributions to the U.N. regular budget, through which ECOSOC is funded. This would mean ECOSOC would lose 22 percent of its budget. How will you counter China's influence in the body while we are simultaneously withdrawing financial support, making China the largest funder?

Answer. Our first duty is to the American people to ensure taxpayer dollars are invested wisely and effectively. If confirmed, I will work to hold the U.N. accountable and advance our priorities. I will also work with our partners and allies to prevent China from using the U.N. to advance its interests at the expense of the United States and others.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DAN NEGREA BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. Reports on China's efforts within ECOSOC and other U.N. bodies indicate that China is strategically expanding its influence within the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), particularly in placing Chinese nationals in leadership roles.

If confirmed, what specific actions will you take to encourage American nationals to assume leadership roles within ECOSOC and to promote American values within ECOSOC?

Answer. The United States needs a long-term strategy to prevent China from using the U.N. to advance its interests at the expense of other states and to set norms and standards that undermine U.S. interests. That strategy must involve working closely with our partners and allies.

Candidates from the United States and countries that align with our interests need to win elections to key leadership posts in the U.N. We also need to increase qualified American representation throughout the U.N. system. This is particularly important in the specialized and technical agencies where China has been increasingly active.

If confirmed, I will continue the Administration's effort to execute strategies to actively support U.S. candidates in both appointed positions and elections, in consultation with the White House, to promote America First principles, and advance a safer, stronger, and more prosperous America.

If confirmed, I will leverage bilateral and multilateral partnerships to advance U.S. interests and counter China's influence in international organizations. I will confront CCP ideological language, messaging and foreign policy initiatives, which attempt to normalize its authoritarian actions and human rights violations and abuses. Additionally, I will push back on the CCP's inroads in developing countries.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DAN NEGREA BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. The scale of human suffering and destruction in Gaza is staggering, and it is deeply concerning how PM Netanyahu and his government are hindering reputable actors—including the United Nations—from carrying out life-saving work. The ECOSOC Representative's role requires oversight and coordination of U.S. policy to ensure our priorities are advanced at the U.N. and assistance reaches those who need it most. Do you believe the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is effectively delivering sufficient aid to those most in need?

Answer. From day one, the Administration has been open to creative solutions that securely provide aid to Palestinians in Gaza and protect Israel. If confirmed, I will work to meet President Trump's objective of rapidly expanding entry and delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in Gaza, leveraging the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's secure aid delivery system and the U.N. humanitarian system's resources.

Question. Do you believe the U.N. is best equipped to manage the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza, and do you commit to taking steps to ensure the U.N. can quickly scale up humanitarian aid into Gaza to deliver aid?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to mobilize all available mechanisms for delivering desperately needed humanitarian assistance into Gaza, including the U.N. humanitarian system and other aid delivery efforts, including the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and others.

Essential lifesaving and humanitarian programs will continue, and we will make strategic investments that strengthen our partners and our own country. The United States expects capable countries to increase their share of the burden of lifesaving foreign aid globally.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RILEY BARNES BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Secretary Rubio and I have fought for the protection of internationally recognized human rights for years. How, if confirmed, will you continue this mission in your role?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work diligently to protect the unalienable rights and freedoms recognized in our founding documents, and champion American values globally. These provide a firm foundation for DRL's work.

Question. What is, in your opinion, the biggest human rights issue of today?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, free speech is among the most cherished rights we enjoy as Americans. It is a right enshrined in our constitution, and it sets us apart as a beacon of freedom around the world. It is important that we defend free speech as an essential element of good governance. It is certainly an important issue, and if confirmed, I am committed to defending free speech as an essential element of good governance.

But beyond this one issue, if confirmed, I do hope to work closely with the committee on issues of mutual concern.

Question. What can the United States do in response?

Answer. The Bureau's job is to tell the truth, to call out countries that violate human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to expose and punish bad actors who threaten the American way of life.

Question. If confirmed, what is DRL's role post reorganization to ensure the promotion of internationally recognized human rights is truly embedded in regional bureaus and bi- and multi-lateral engagements?

Answer. It is a primary duty of the U.S. Government to preserve unalienable rights for the American people, and I will work to ensure that we are an example for the rest of the world. Our human rights strategies will also require the international community. As Secretary Rubio has said, America first does not mean America alone. So, if confirmed, I commit to DRL working closely with regional bureaus, posts, and F on bilateral and multilateral issues and human rights interests.

Question. DRL has long led the State Department's work on support for internationally recognized human rights in China. This work has directly contributed to years of reporting on China's human rights abuses, directly supporting the work of the Congressional Executive Commission on China and providing an important source of information inside China as the CCP works to increasingly restrict access to China. Amid the Department's reorganization, some of these programs are being transitioned to other bureaus. Given DRL's historic role in overseeing human rights programming in China, including through the development of years-long projects that shed light on China's abuses of internationally recognized human rights, going forward, what role does DRL have to play in the department's broader counter-China work?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring DRL remains engaged in supporting the Department's broader counter-CCP work. DRL will continue to highlight the CCP's human rights abuses through mechanisms such as the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and in international venues. DRL will continue promoting accountability for human rights violations and abuses in China by considering the imposition of visa restrictions and economic sanctions on individuals connected to such heinous acts. DRL will also continue its work to implement legislation such as the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to consultation with SFRC as DRL works to transition its China programming to other bureaus?

Answer. Yes. As I said in my opening statement, as a former Senate staffer, I have deep respect for the committee and the important role you fulfill in the conduct of foreign policy. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with this Committee on issues of mutual concern and I promise to make myself available to Committee Members.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RILEY BARNES BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. What are the top five democracy and human rights issues you would prioritize, if confirmed?

Answer. As President Trump recently said, "America stands with all people who resist tyranny, defend their faith, and fight for the God-given rights of every human being." If confirmed, I will work diligently to elevate the unalienable rights and freedoms recognized in our founding documents. I will be an ally in the cause of liberty and freedom. I will challenge those who censor and restrict freedom of expression,

because as Secretary Rubio has said, free speech is among the most cherished rights we enjoy as Americans. I will defend religious freedom and push back against the scourge of global antisemitism. I will combat human trafficking, and I will defend American workers and industry on the global stage. Forced labor and child labor are morally reprehensible and threaten American prosperity by creating an unlevel playing field.

Question. What foreign assistance programs and awards remain under the purview of the DRL Bureau following the Trump Administration's cancellation of foreign assistance awards and reorganization earlier this year?

Answer. I understand that DRL currently maintains active programming across its regional and global, thematic portfolios. Per the reorganization, DRL is working to transfer regional programs to the regional bureaus.

Question. What is the coordination mechanism between DRL and regional bureaus that are implementing foreign assistance awards on democracy, human rights, labor, trafficking, and religious freedom issues? If confirmed, will you or someone in DRL management clear on these awards?

Answer. I understand that DRL is actively engaging foreign assistance offices, desk officers, and embassy personnel to transfer certain programs to regional bureaus. If confirmed, under my leadership DRL will continue to coordinate closely with regional and functional bureaus to ensure there is close cooperation on cross-cutting issues.

Question. The Assistant Secretary for DRL has a statutory requirement to review all matters pertaining to human rights in the conduct of foreign policy including the provision of security assistance. DRL's Security and Human Rights Office was disbanded, and Leahy vetting requirements have moved to the Foreign Assistance Oversight (FAO) office under F. How will you fulfill the statutory requirements of this position with no staff under your purview to conduct Leahy vetting?

Answer. Responsibility for managing Leahy vetting functions is being realigned from DRL to the Office of Foreign Assistance Oversight consistent with the Department's May 29, 2025, congressional notification.

Question. How will you ensure that FAO is conducting Leahy vetting of security assistance partners as required by law?

Answer. The Department of State will continue to implement the requirements under the Leahy Law. Responsibility for managing Leahy vetting functions is being realigned from DRL to the Office of Foreign Assistance Oversight consistent with the Department's May 29, 2025, congressional notification.

Question. President Trump and Vice President Vance have both expressed concern about the "backsliding of freedom of expression in Europe," with Trump stating after the Munich Security Conference that "Europe is missing the wonderful right of freedom of expression." Do you agree with this statement?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed I will defend free speech as an essential element of good governance. Whether in established or nascent democracies or in authoritarian states, the United States will defend and protect freedom of expression when it is unduly restricted or penalized, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart ideas and information of all kinds. If confirmed, I will encourage our allies and partners in Europe to meet challenges by embracing their values. I will engage with them to encourage their taking measures to amend or repeal measures that undermine freedom of expression, including measures that affect U.S. citizens or unduly burden U.S. companies.

Question. Do you think that freedom of expression in Europe is the most egregious and pressing issue deserving of DRL resources?

Answer. Free speech is among the most cherished rights we enjoy as Americans, and governments have the obligation to protect freedom of expression under international law.

Freedom of expression is an essential element of good governance—and is critical to the exercise of other fundamental freedoms, such as peaceful assembly and religion or belief. It is also key to the rule of law and the ability of the public and press to hold authorities accountable. Societies are strengthened, not threatened, by expressions of opinion and dissent.

Question. What is your understanding of your authority vis-à-vis the office of the Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom and the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, which by statute report directly to the Secretary?

Answer. Under Secretary Rubio's reorganization, the Office of International Religious Freedom and the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism are once again organized within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), as both offices had been in prior years. These changes will in no way infringe on the authorities of the Religious Freedom Ambassador or the Anti-Semitism Envoy, who, in accordance with their respective statutes, continue to "report directly to the Secretary."

Question. DRL has historically played a critical role in administering emergency assistance to at-risk human rights defenders and civil society organizations facing urgent threats. If confirmed, will you advocate the continuation of lifeline of emergency support for human rights defenders?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to support human rights defenders in ways consistent with Secretary Rubio's vision for an America First foreign policy.

Question. Will DRL under your leadership remain positioned to deliver timely aid to defenders and civil society groups under threat?

Answer. If confirmed, under my leadership DRL will continue to support threatened human rights leaders and civil society groups that are advancing fundamental freedoms of all persons. As Secretary Rubio has said, "Foreign assistance done right can advance our national interests, protect our borders, and strengthen our partnerships with key allies."

Following the Law and the Constitution

Question. In your hearing testimony you stated, "our rights come from God our Creator—not from our laws, not from our governments." Do you agree that you are required to abide by the law, including advocating for rights established under U.S. law?

Answer. Yes, of course. In the Declaration of Independence, our Founders laid out a vision of unalienable rights as "endowed by [our] Creator," and therefore not subject to the whims of governments to grant or withdraw. That belief is wholly consistent with my abiding by the law, carrying out all of DRL's statutorily mandated functions, and advocating for the equal rights and inherent dignity of all human beings.

Question. What does the principle of separation of church and state mean to you, and how would you abide by it as a senior U.S. official, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to defend the rights of all people, irrespective of their religion or beliefs, as I have throughout my career. I will vigorously defend the rights of all to organize their lives in accordance with their beliefs. DRL will continue to advocate for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, everywhere.

Award Terminations

Question. As part of the Department's foreign assistance review, bureaus were instructed to make recommendations to the Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance (F) on which programs to terminate. Did you recommend the termination of any DRL grants supporting the human rights of persons with disabilities?

Answer. I am fully committed to promoting and defending the human rights of all people, including persons with disabilities. In March, I was deeply honored to be part of the U.S. Delegation to the 2025 Special Olympics Winter Games where I had the chance to meet U.S. athletes and cheer them on.

Consistent with President Trump's Executive Order on Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, Secretary Rubio initiated a review of all foreign assistance programs to ensure their efficiency and their consistency with the Administration's foreign policy. I understand some DRL programs involving people with disabilities were discontinued due to other specific concerns related to those programs—not because they supported people with disabilities.

Human Rights

Question. The Administration has withdrawn the U.S. from the U.N. Human Rights Council and recently announced that they will not participate in a U.N. review of its human rights record—the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The authoritarian government of Nicaragua is the only other state that has not engaged in the UPR process to date. How does the withdrawal from international human rights institutions and processes like the UPR advance your statutory mandate to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights?

Answer. The U.N. Human Rights Council's flaws are longstanding and well known. It has eroded its own credibility with the election of serious human rights

violators who have ideological bias and a relentless, disproportionate targeting of Israel.

The United States remains actively engaged on human rights issues and has a variety of tools to ensure U.S. values and interests are represented globally. These include oversight bodies like the U.N. General Assembly where the Administration is already pushing for reforms and accountability.

The Administration will continue to support victims of human rights abuses and work to prevent abuses and violations in other venues.

The United States will continue to pursue a human rights agenda in line with our national interest, using all the tools at our disposal. If confirmed, I will also consult closely with our allies to address the most egregious country situations.

Question. The Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for El Salvador claimed there were "no credible reports of human rights abuses" in 2024. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders and other reputable human rights organizations documented numerous instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture in El Salvador's prisons, government led attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, and other human rights abuses. How do you reconcile these credible reports with the Department's assessment in the 2024 reports?

Answer. I am firmly committed to promoting human rights in El Salvador while also respecting the country's sovereignty. El Salvador has the right to determine its own internal policies and security strategies to respond to threats posed by foreign terrorist organizations and gangs like Mara Salvatrucha (MS) 13, Barrio 18, and Barrio Sureños. If confirmed, I would support democratic principles, promote respect for all unalienable rights, and encourage transparency in all countries.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RILEY BARNES BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

DRL is responsible for writing and researching the annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) Report, which is required under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA). These reports are relied upon by international organizations who support victims of human trafficking and send a clear message to other nations that failure to protect their most vulnerable citizens—women, children, religious minorities, victims of gender-based violence—means forfeiting opportunities to do business with America.

On July 11, 2025, 22 of the 31 civil service and foreign service officers responsible for researching and writing these reports were fired, leaving just 3 supervisors and 6 analysts to write over 180 reports each year. Those RIFed were leading experts on these countries and had extensive experience engaging with leaders of their covered countries to combat and prevent trafficking and help victims.

Question. After this catastrophic loss of institutional knowledge and country specific expertise, how will you maintain the quality and effectiveness of the TIP Reports?

Answer. The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) continues to lead the State Department's global efforts to combat human trafficking. Regional bureaus and posts will continue to closely collaborate with the TIP Office to produce comprehensive and accurate assessments of government efforts using the "minimum standards" enumerated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Question. How many analysts are currently assigned to each region for drafting the TIP reports? Please specify which region and how many analysts or officers assigned.

Answer. At this point, I have not been briefed on individual staff assignments. If confirmed, I will ensure the TIP Office has the relevant expertise to fulfill the Department's statutory mandate to complete the annual Trafficking in Persons Report and that it remains a highly effective tool for the United States to engage with governments to strengthen collective efforts to prosecute traffickers, protect victims, and prevent the crime.

Question. The Trump Administration has terminated nearly all, if not all, democracy programs that have long earned bipartisan support and funding from Congress and were administered by the State Department and USAID. Without these pro-

grams, in what ways do you plan to support democratic practices and the strengthening of democratic institutions abroad?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that DRL works in coordination with Regional Bureaus, Posts and the Office of the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom (F) to support democratic, accountable governance abroad.

DRL under my leadership would promote open, competitive political processes and the strengthening of democratic institutions, and work with Regional Bureaus, Posts, and F to direct tools of leverage and programming to those ends.

Question. Without these programs, in what ways do you plan to support good governance and transparent governance abroad?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that DRL works in coordination with Regional Bureaus, Posts and F to advance good and transparent governance abroad by incorporating these issues into bilateral dialogues, supporting the role of civil society and independent media, including in exposing and opposing corruption and other abuses of power, and, in countries where governments have announced reforms, reinforcing the importance of their implementation.

Question. Without these programs, in what kinds of ways do you plan to support civil society abroad?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that DRL maintains robust engagement with civil society organizations working to defend and advance human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law, and accountable governance around the world. I will promote civil society engagement and cooperation as an integral part of bilateral dialogues, and in my travels overseas, I will seek to meet with civil society representatives.

Question. If confirmed, what will be your top 3 priorities when it comes to supporting democracy and democratic practices abroad?

Answer. As President Trump recently said, “America stands with all people who resist tyranny, defend their faith, and fight for the God-given rights of every human being.” If confirmed, I will work diligently to elevate the unalienable rights and freedoms recognized in our founding documents. Also, our country is the strongest defender of religious freedom around the world, and championing this first freedom would be an essential component of my job if confirmed. Fighting trafficking in persons is also vital to protecting our communities and fortifying our national security, and fighting international forced labor increases our economic strength.

Question. Do you believe that the United States should support free and fair elections in countries around the world?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree that the United States should combat and prevent gender-based violence and violence against children around the world?

Answer. All human life matters. All persons—every man, woman, and child—are equal in dignity and rights. If confirmed, I will defend everyone’s unalienable rights. All governments must protect the inherent and equal rights and dignity of all persons, including women and children.

Question. Do you agree that the United States should combat and help reduce discrimination against women around the world?

Answer. I agree that it is a primary duty of the U.S. Government to protect unalienable rights and that all human life matters. All persons—every man, woman, and child—are equal in dignity and rights. If confirmed, I will defend everyone’s unalienable rights.

Question. Do you agree that the United States should support the freedom of assembly around the world?

Answer. Freedom of assembly is enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution and is also in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Governments have an obligation to protect freedom of peaceful assembly under their international obligations. This fundamental freedom allows individuals to gather peacefully for various purposes, including political and religious pursuits.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RILEY BARNES BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. I am deeply concerned about the politicization and dramatic reduction of areas covered by the annual Human Rights Report, upon which our partners around the world have relied for decades as a credible source of information to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. You served as Senior Bureau Official during the drafting of this year's report. Do you believe violence and discrimination against women, LGBT+ persons, indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities; sexual violence against children; suppression and denial of peaceful assembly and association; free and fair elections; and government corruption qualify as internationally recognized human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to promoting the unalienable rights and dignity of all human beings. That principle reflects the values on which our nation was founded.

I believe America's strength comes from our enduring values. These values are the historic, unalienable natural rights that we have as individuals, pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in this world.

Question. How does stripping these vital rights from the State Department's annual human rights report affect the credibility of the United States as a leader on human rights issues?

Answer. The United States continues to lead the world as a champion of human rights. The 2024 Human Rights Report is fully responsive to the legislative mandates that underpin it and spotlights human rights abuses globally.

Question. What specific instructions or guidance did you and other political appointees under your chain of command give to career officials that shaped the content of the 2024 Human Rights Report?

Answer. The Department restructured the 2024 Human Rights Report to better align with statutory requirements, remove ideological bias, and help ensure it is more useful, readable, and objective. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with Congress to advance human rights around the world to make America safer, stronger, and more secure.

Question. Earlier this year, GAO issued a report evaluating end-use monitoring laws and the State and Defense Departments' monitoring and response mechanisms, including the Civilian Harm Incident Response Guidance (CHIRG). GAO recommended that State develop (1) a mechanism to incorporate allegations of civilian harm into its response process, and (2) a strategy to identify appropriate staffing and resources to support that process.

What steps did you take as Senior Bureau Official to ensure these recommendations are being implemented and what steps do you intend to take if confirmed?

Answer. Following the Secretary's reorganization in July 2025, these functions and responsibilities have been transferred to the Under Secretary for F, and would therefore not be within my purview if confirmed as DRL Assistant Secretary. That said, if confirmed, I can assure you that mitigating all forms of civilian harm would be a top priority of mine.

Question. The Leahy Law requires that U.S. security assistance not go to units implicated in gross human rights abuses. To help implement these requirements, the State Department built out the Leahy Vetting Forums, a structured process for countries receiving certain types of U.S. security assistance that is difficult to trace.

If confirmed, do you plan to continue and work to improve these Leahy Vetting Forums to ensure compliance with the law and protect U.S. security assistance from being transferred to units implicated in gross violations of human rights?

Answer. The Department of State will continue to implement the requirements under the Leahy Law.