

Opening Statement of Melinda “Mindy” Hildebrand
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 3, 2025

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.

Lastly, 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, 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.

Costa Rica has long been one of the United States' most reliable and like-minded partners in the Western Hemisphere. As a longstanding 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, cyber security, and combatting illegal immigration. In addition, increasing Chinese Communist Party economic coercion poses risks for U.S. national security and prosperity.

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."