

Statement of Michael K. Young
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 17, 2026

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia.

I am deeply grateful for the confidence and trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. As Thomas Jefferson once noted: "The greatest honor of a citizen is to serve his country, but to represent her before the world is a sacred trust." If confirmed, I pledge to honor that trust and work closely with this Committee and with Congress to protect and promote U.S. interests in Serbia, to advance American priorities, and to build a bilateral relationship that contributes to a safer, stronger, and more prosperous United States.

Service to our great nation and to the American people has been deeply engrained in my family for generations and has been the greatest privilege and honor of our lives. Both my parents served in the military in World War II. My father was in the infantry and served in some of the most difficult battles in Europe, including the Battle of the Bulge. My mother served in the Women's Air Service Patrol and transported bombers and trained pilots.

My son, Stewart, who sits behind me today, has served in the U.S. courts and as an Assistant U.S. attorney for almost two decades and now serves as the Criminal Deputy Attorney General for the State of Utah. My daughter, Kathryn Owen, who also sits just behind me, and her husband, Gwyddon Owen, both graduates of the U.S. Air Force Academy, have collectively served all over the world for over three decades as officers in the U.S. Air Force.

Finally, and most importantly, my wife, Mrs. Marti Young, who too sits behind me today has served by my side for the past 15 years, selflessly, relentlessly and with great distinction, at two major public universities and in various international settings and in all our international efforts and engagements. Without the promise of her support, guidance and assistance, I could not imagine undertaking the great responsibility on behalf of our country for which I am under consideration today.

I too have had the privilege of serving in all three branches of our government. And I am truly humbled and honored to be considered today for this particular position of tremendous responsibility and sacred trust.

If confirmed, I will lead the team at the U.S. Embassy Belgrade to deepen our defense and security cooperation to advance U.S. interests, to expand our trade and investment relationship to increase U.S. prosperity, to foster regional stability, and to continue to build a partnership with Serbia that will better promote our interests in this strategically critical region.

If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and security of Embassy Belgrade personnel and all U.S. citizens in Serbia.

I will continue to strengthen our bilateral engagement and deepen our economic and business ties, moving Serbia towards energy independence and improved energy infrastructure. I will encourage Serbia to embrace a political and economic future that benefits the United States, not competitors such as Russia and China. There is great potential for U.S. companies in Serbia, and deeper economic ties with the U.S. is very much in our and Serbia's interests. I will work to ensure a favorable business climate and level playing field in which they can compete and on which they will win.

I will prioritize deepening our security and defense cooperation with Serbia, building upon the already strong ties Serbia has formed with the Ohio National Guard through the State Partnership Program over the last twenty years, a cornerstone of our bilateral security ties.

I will ensure that U.S. industry is well-positioned to meet Serbia's growing interest in meeting its defense needs with U.S. equipment and in cooperation with the U.S. defense industry.

If confirmed, I will partner with government of Serbia to counter global threats and support our mutual priorities and interests.

I will encourage Serbia to promote security, stability, and prosperity throughout the Western Balkans, including through normalization of relations with Kosovo.

I will also continue to work with Serbia to use its influence to maintain regional stability, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina as we seek to uphold the peace brought by the Dayton Peace Accords.

Finally, if I am afforded this great privilege and opportunity to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia, I will engage with Serbian audiences to strengthen our partnership through public diplomacy, strategic communications, and people-to-people ties ahead of the great opportunity that Expo 2027 in Belgrade presents us.

I thank the Chair and the Ranking Member for the opportunity and privilege to be here today, and I look forward to your questions.