

Opening Statement of Mark Abreu
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 24, 2026

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Kaine, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I am grateful for the confidence President Trump has placed in me and to Secretary Rubio for his support and vision for our hemisphere. My path to this room had humble origins.

I was born on the beautiful island of Puerto Rico, raised by my mother and late grandfather, and shaped by many teachers and mentors, before nearly a decade in the United States Air Force, a brief tenure as a management consultant, and then nearly two decades of clandestine service at the Central Intelligence Agency, including tours as Chief of Station in Latin America. I had the privilege of working on Capitol Hill, as a Congressional Fellow in then-Senator Rubio's office. To the young people watching: my story, from a small island to this room, is proof that merit matters in this country. Hard work, initiative, and discipline can take you as far as you are willing to go.

From day one, President Trump has been clear that American foreign policy exists to serve American interests first. Every relationship we build abroad must answer three questions: Does it make America stronger? Does it make America safer? Does it make America more prosperous?

Our strategic relationship with El Salvador delivers on all three standards. If confirmed, I will work to keep it that way. A decade ago, it was the murder capital of the world. Today, El Salvador is one of the safest countries in the Western Hemisphere – a turnaround driven by President Bukele, whom Secretary Rubio has called the strongest security leader in our region.

That transformation makes America stronger: A capable, self-reliant partner in our own hemisphere shares the burden of security instead of adding to it, freeing American resources for priorities at home and keeping this region out of Beijing's orbit. We should also use every effective regional mechanism available to reinforce that security cooperation and protect our shared interests.

It makes America safer, too. El Salvador stands with us against MS-13, Barrio 18, and other narco-terrorist networks the Trump Administration has rightly designated as threats to our communities, stopping crime and illegal immigration at their source rather than at our border.

And it makes America more prosperous. The National Security Strategy makes clear that every U.S. official must help U.S. firms compete and succeed overseas. I will ensure that embassy teams identify strategic acquisition and investment opportunities for American companies, especially through government tenders. Additionally, this year's Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, the first of its kind in our hemisphere, cements the United States as El Salvador's top trading partner by a wide margin. A prosperous El Salvador is a magnet, not a launching pad. Salvadorans who once looked north for opportunity now find it at home, starting businesses, drawing investment, and creating jobs in their own communities.

If confirmed, I am committed to leading the U.S. Mission in El Salvador with honor and fortitude, faithfully representing President Trump's America First foreign policy. I pledge to work collaboratively with Congress and our Salvadoran allies, respecting their sovereignty and cementing the security gains achieved; to build on this success and set the standard the rest of Central America can follow. The prosperity we build together will draw even greater American investment and bring lasting abundance to both of our nations.

Mr. Chairman, I have carried three words with me since my first day at the Air Force Academy: integrity, service, and excellence. I carried them through every assignment since, and I would carry them into San Salvador, faithfully representing American interests, upholding the Constitution, answering to this Committee, and to the American people, every step of the way.