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Ambassador-Designate to the Sultanate of Oman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
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Madam Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. I deeply appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have shown in me. If confirmed by the Senate, I will employ the full range of our diplomatic tools to help achieve our goal of a stable, secure, and democratic Middle East. I will work with our Omani partners on counter-terrorism and counter proliferation, and will encourage their efforts to promote transparency and accountability. With our private sector partners, I will encourage expansion of the commercial ties between the U.S. and Oman together with efforts to diversify the Omani economy through the development of entrepreneurship, and the empowerment of women and youth. Finally, I will work with the Government of Oman to promote the growth of independent civil society, and deepen people-to-people engagement between our two countries.

I would like to pause for a moment, Madam Chairman, to recognize my husband Paco Cosio-Marron, our children, Victoria, Alexandra, and Anthony, and my sister Carla Holtz, who are with me here today. I thank them for their endless support through accompanied and unaccompanied tours in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq. They have loved our tours together in the region, and have been stoic during long separations.

The United States and Oman have shared a strong and dynamic relationship since the earliest days of our nation's history. This bond dates back to 1790, when the Boston brig "Rambler" entered the port of Muscat. In 1833, the United States and Oman concluded a treaty of friendship and navigation.

The United States and Oman enjoy an excellent security relationship, and work together to pursue shared regional strategic objectives, enhanced border security, and freedom and safety of navigation in vital shipping lanes. Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other contingency operations have benefited from Omani support and cooperation. The Omani military is well-trained, pursues a focused strategy, and is regarded as one of the most professional

armed forces in the region. If confirmed, I will work hard to broaden and deepen the decades-long security relationship between the U.S. and Oman.

From the United Nations to the Gulf Cooperation Council, and in the Arab League, Oman has played an active and helpful role in multilateral diplomacy. In neighboring Yemen, Oman invests significant resources in a strategy of stabilization through political engagement, development aid, and humanitarian assistance. Oman is a strong partner in countering terrorism and extremism in the Arabian Peninsula.

Since Sultan Qaboos bin Said came to power in 1970, Oman has made dramatic gains in its development, emerging as a modern state with first class infrastructure and modern educational institutions. In the 2010 UN Human Development Report, Oman ranked number one out of the 135 countries studied for progress in the previous 40 years in “human development,” which focuses on education, access to quality healthcare, and other basic living standards.

The Sultan has demonstrated his ongoing interest in partnering with institutions of higher education around the world, including our own. In 2011, Oman established a new scholarship program through which more than 500 young Omanis have enrolled in higher education in the U.S. Last October, the Sultan funded an endowed professorship of Middle East Studies at the College of William and Mary.

Oman has made important strides in promoting women’s rights and participation in public life. Omani women serve in elected and appointed political offices, including two Cabinet posts. In 2005 Oman was the first Arab country to appoint a woman as Ambassador to the United States, the honorable Hunaina Al Mughairy, who remains a pillar of Washington’s diplomatic community. Omani women comprise over 40 percent of university students, though female illiteracy remains a significant problem. The government of Oman is making an effort to strengthen legislation that will enhance the resources available for women and children in health and education. The State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has, for many years, supported training and other programming for Omani women, and if confirmed, I look forward to enhancing those efforts.

The Sultan took quick action to respond to demands by the Omani public for greater civic participation early last year. There were elections for the country’s Consultative Council, a Cabinet shuffle that incorporated several members of the elected Council into leadership positions in government, and programs to address

unemployment. If confirmed, I will encourage Oman, our friend and partner, to continue to respond to the hopes and aspirations of its people.

Economic and commercial ties between our two countries are growing rapidly across a variety of sectors. U.S. exports to Oman were over \$1.4 billion last year, and bilateral trade volume is up over 50 percent since January 2009, when the U.S.–Oman Free Trade Agreement came into effect. If I am confirmed, I will place a high priority on ensuring that U.S. companies have the support needed to pursue new commercial opportunities in Oman.

The important cultural connection between our two countries was demonstrated recently by the 2011-2012 inaugural season of the Royal Opera House in Muscat. Over the past year, world-renowned American artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Yo-Yo Ma and Renee Fleming shared the great American performing arts tradition with sold-out audiences in Muscat. The Kennedy Center will continue its partnership with the Opera House in the coming season, in which American artists will headline nine performances. If confirmed, I look forward to encouraging a blossoming cultural relationship.

I would also like to assure you that, if confirmed, my highest priority will be protecting the safety and security of the dedicated men and women at our mission, as well as all Americans living in, working in, and visiting Oman.

Finally, if confirmed, I also look forward to welcoming the Committee's members and staff to Muscat. Madame Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee. I look forward to your questions.