

**Statement of Kenneth S. George
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 13, 2018**

Chairman Rubio and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. It is indeed an honor to appear as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I am humbled by the opportunity to serve our country again. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all stakeholders here and in Uruguay to further our interests and foster closer and mutually beneficial relations with the government and people of Uruguay.

Although all could not be here, I am supported today by the most important people in my life, my wife of 43 years, Tricia, and our children, Kenneth, Patrick, Clement, and Elizabeth and their spouses. I won't list the grandchildren but we have them, including one on the way, and they are brilliant and beautiful. I am blessed to enjoy their support and encouragement.

Our family has a long history of service to our country. Without detailing our ancestors' endeavors in General Washington's army, I will say my grandparents met on the battlefields of France in WWI, she as an army nurse from Pennsylvania and he an army captain. Tricia's and my father both served in the Army Air Corps in WWII. I served as an officer in the 82nd Airborne Army Reserve. Tricia serves on the Texas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts here in D.C. and is an active cattle rancher.

Kenneth, our eldest, worked as a Congressional intern and in the Treasury Department in the Office of Economic Policy. Patrick is a Major in the Marine Corps Reserve after serving two tours in Iraq. Clement spent four years in the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer with multiple deployments to the Persian Gulf and supported our humanitarian relief effort in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Elizabeth interned in the office of the Attorney General of Texas and has been active in numerous political campaigns. She graduated from the University of Chicago's Booth School, where she was President of the graduate school of business.

I believe my career, both in prior government service and in the private sector, has prepared me for this responsibility. This nominating process is not new to me. I served as Assistant Secretary and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service in President Reagan's first term of office. I was responsible for our trade promotional staff and programs in 65 countries, 120 foreign cities. During President Reagan's first term, the Caribbean Basin Initiative was passed. I was given additional implementation responsibilities under the leadership of USTR William Brock. Lastly, you will remember there was a little fracas in Granada and we were tasked to lead the economic rebuilding of

the Island. High unemployment in the male population was presenting an excellent recruiting opportunity for Cuba's extraterritorial political ambitions. It was our responsibility to restore work opportunities and sources of self-pride in the local population and restore economic stability.

In the private sector, I could best be described as an entrepreneur. In the 70's, it was real estate development and building a publicly held conglomerate with furniture manufacturing, real estate development, and oil and gas exploration, headquartered in Midland, Texas. In the 80's and 90's, it was the government and hospital management. With the help of outstanding staff, I put together and was Chairman and CEO of the second largest ESOP in the country at the time, EPIC Healthcare Group, with 15,000 employee-owners in 25 states. After selling EPIC to Healthtrust-HCA, I was fortunate enough to build one of the largest private ambulance companies in Texas.

I can honestly say, in every case, building up a high functioning team was the key to our successes. Leadership, clarity of vision, and allowing people to do their best is the fertile soil that enables an organization to flourish and accomplish its mission. If confirmed, this is what I hope you will find that I bring to the job.

Uruguay is an exciting country. It is one of, if not the most, progressive in Latin America with the largest middle class, has a history of strong democratic values, and has a record of respecting religious freedoms. The Economist magazine says that Uruguay has the only "complete democracy" in Latin America and that it equals Canada's. I might add, the largest commitment of soldiers to UN Peacekeeping operations around the world of any country in Latin America, bigger than Mexico, Brazil, Argentina...all others. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat all forms of human trafficking.

The United States is both Uruguay's fourth largest trading partner, with a trade surplus, and an important investor. But still only fourth! China is their largest trading partner. I am committed to helping develop business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies.

In closing, if confirmed, I look forward to working with all stakeholders to maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, to advance our national interests, and support continued development of democratic institutions in the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a relatively small country, with an outsized influence in the region.

Thank you.